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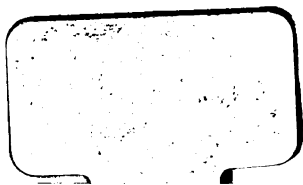
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FAIRY ALICE.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "LIFE OF LAURENCE STERNE,"
"BELLA DONNA," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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1865.

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FAIRY ALICE.

Book the First.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

THE BRUCE FAMILY.

THE Bruce family were "Scotch to the backbone"—a sentiment often uttered by the head of that house, at the end of his dinner-table, at the window of his club, and on the broad terraces of his fair gardens. Down this dinner-table the Bruce eye rested complacently on massive silver *épergnes* and candelabra (had he been a thoroughly vulgar "creature," he would have said, "Solid silver, sir! solid silver, sir!"); in that

club window the Bruce figure stood close by the figures of noble lords and high commoners, and to the eye of the people in the street was framed in the same plate glass; and from the terrace corner where Bruce stood with the listening friend, he could look back across a charming plaisance, laid out in glowing rings of scarlet and blue, across "ornamental waters" and vases and statues, to the "Castle," with its towers, and gables, and flag flying, and its delicate airy greenhouse, running out to the right, glittering and sparkling as if it were made of crystal. Down would come Bruce's stick, which had been flourishing in the air, and pointing out all these beauties, on the gravel; and Bruce himself would say, "Sir, I put every stone there together; this place was a swamp, sir, before I came and drained it. There wasn't a tree, sir, between this and Houghton. I planted that clump there, sir, on the hill. I don't think there was a blade of grass for two miles round! I did

it all, sir ; I suppose there is fifty thousand pounds sunk in that swamp, sir ; and—and —when I began, sir, I vow to God, I hadn't two sixpences to rub one on the other."

Perhaps it might have been better if he had had, or at least, not so often flourished this early poverty before his audience. For the fact was, that all these fine things which the stick pointed out, had been purchased by hard earned money, which was honourable enough ; but the hard earned money had been acquired in that dreadful social "Seven Dials," TRADE. It had helped him to the "solid silver" épergnes, to the privilege of looking through the club plate glass, to the Castle and grounds, but there was more wanting which it could not get for him — wealth so "rank" and "strong" was not agreeable to fashionable stomachs. Though the Bruce arms were on the flag, and flapped and fluttered like a heavy mainsail in every breeze, the story was accepted doubtfully ; it could not help

elegant society to "get down" the heavy rather coarse joints of underdone money, made by the ways of Trade. And therefore it was that neither the épergnes, under whose shelter he vainly invited them to sit, nor the fine Castle "Brucetowers" to which he as vainly asked them "down," nor the walks, nor the gorgeous rings of flowers—which had a reputation in the country—could tempt any of the "finer" people to associate with him. He might exhibit specimens of a rough and effective majolica at his table, but of Sèvres and Capo di Monte, and of the finer porcelain, he could not secure one "bit." And he was dull enough not to see that this was chiefly his own fault, from his perpetual digging up the old "remains," the "unpleasant" corpse of the old trade-life, which should not have been brought into drawing-rooms, but should have been allowed to decompose away quietly.

He had a family whom this affected a

good deal. A sister who had married into trade before the "solid silver" épergnes had been bought, or the Castle built — people who had by this time eight children and "a WAREHOUSE," in all its horrible deformity. A young Corinthian, curious in such matters, and who was sharp at finding out details, discovered first "a WHARF," and from the Wharf was led on easily to the trail of the Warehouse. The worst was, this was a naked glaring department that could not be concealed or varnished over; for the name "Triphook" was in that huge abdomen of a guide, "The London Post Office Directory," and Triphook had vessels that came in almost daily from Holland and other places, and landed casks of lard and hides at his Wharf, warehoused them afterwards on the floors of his Warehouses, and sent them away later in huge waggons drawn by three horses, and with a conspicuous "J. Triphook" on their sides, to railway stations. A good deal of the butter in

daily consumption was said to be mixed with "Triphook's Prize Medal Lard."

Besides this fatal sister, Mr. Bruce had two sons; an eldest son who was "to have everything," and whose marriage was to raise the family permanently. A good old English or Scotch titled family was to be found; and the alliance would help to put up a sort of permanent screen between the Bruce family and the dreadful prospects of wharfs and warehouses, and lard from Holland, and TRADE generally. Mr. Bruce, indeed, said, over and over again, that *his* family was as good as any man's, and that *his* blood was as good as any in the three kingdoms, and repeated his declaration about every stone of the Castle being put together by his own hard earned money. Under other circumstances, and with a little dexterity, some such alliance could have been readily brought about, and the first fruit of Hogarth's "Rake's Progress" made into a sort of Tableau Vivant; but this roughness

and "want of delicacy" in the head of the Bruce family spoiled everything. Old Lady Mantower, a sadly damaged bit of quality, without money (and some say without character), who paid the Castle a surreptitious visit very often, and ate and drank there better than she could hope to do anywhere else, and who saw them very privately in Town, offered to attempt the matter; all but hinting at remuneration for her Services. She knew a lord or two with pauper daughters; but the negotiation failed, owing to the absurd mixture of noisy pride in Mr. Bruce, combined with his ridiculous flourishing of the means by which he had made his money. There remained a second son, whom no one thought of in any way: a quiet, steady, rather sensitive youth, who did not care for the Castle or the *épergne*, who had a good deal of ambition, who read a great deal, and who had brains. Unfortunately, his father disliked him. First, because there was no sympathy

between them; secondly, because he felt this superiority; and thirdly, because the son had once said to him, when Mr. Bruce was harping on "their blood being as good as that of any man in England," and of its flowing directly from the royal line of the same name, "Dear father, what is the use of making such claims. I am very much afraid they laugh at us. You know we have nothing to do with kings or princes, or at least can't show it, if we have." This speech was never forgiven. The father's dislike to this second son seemed to grow every day. Most likely he felt a sort of inferiority, or that the son was affecting a sort of superiority. "You are setting up to be too fine for us, my lad," he would say; "I don't want poetry books and philosophy books in this house. That was not the way I made my money, and put the stones of this house together!" As was before remarked, Mr. Bruce was never conscious of his odd inconsistency in aiming always at

extreme gentility, and yet at the same time dragging from old family closets those old working clothes he had worn so long ago. Though he boasted of the rude and plebeian means by which he had put the stones of his Castle together, still he was scared at the notion of his son following the same course. But what made his dislike almost permanent and habitual, was this incident :

His brother-in-law, Triphook, came to him one day with a sort of rough cordiality, as if he had a transaction in hides or lard to propose to him, which must be completed on the spot, and said to him, "By the way, brother-in-law, something occurred to me last night. There's our daughter Sarah growing up—a fine, good heap of a girl—good quality too." (He had before his eyes the image of a fine fair cask of the prime commodity he dealt in.) "She's been a little 'down' latterly, and do you know I think I could make a good 'offer' at the reason. At any rate, I and my girl have been thinking

it over ; and as we have eight of them at home, it is time to make a beginning. What do you say, now, brother-in-law—one of yours to one of ours, eh? I don't want the best or first quality, you know"—the same image of the staple in his profession rising before him—"but I mean your second lad."

Mr. Bruce was not displeased at the offer. He respected his relation, the path of whose life lay along a wharf, and among strongly-scented casks. He thought he would do a gracious thing, and honour a man who had made money honourably ; but, in reality, the motive that was operating was a desire to be free of this human reproach that sat at breakfast and dinner before him every day.

He went straight to his son. "It is time for you to marry," he said—the son was only nineteen—"and settle down, and go to your bar and attorneys. I have got a match for you—your cousin Sarah."

The son lifted his eyes from "Smith's

Leading Cases." "You are not serious, father?"

"*I am* serious," said the father, crackling up into a blaze; "always am and will be serious. What do you take me for? I don't want to joke, and never did."

"O, then, as it *is* serious, father," said the son, with perfect respect, and putting a paper-mark into Smith, "I must answer seriously. This is a thing that concerns me and my happiness altogether. I want to make my way in life, and successfully; therefore I must be free, and have nothing to weigh me down. At thirty it would be almost too early to marry."

"And do you tell me, sir, that you dare to refuse what I propose?" said the other, striking Smith a heavy blow, and growing very red. "Do you dare——"

"I mean nothing disrespectful, father," said the son, calmly, and leading "Smith" away; "but there are other, many reasons against it. As for cousin Sarah, we are

wholly unsuited. She is a plain, unintellectual girl, without an idea. I should be miserable—and she would be miserable.”

“I am sure she would,” said his father. “You are quite right. I tell you one thing, you are altogether too fine and high for me, my lad. You ought to go out and stick your wig on your head at once, and go to work at once. I wonder you don’t.”

“I shall be called in three terms more; and once I am, I know you won’t have reason to complain of me.”

“Don’t mention the subject to me, sir,” roared Mr. Bruce. “I don’t want to hear about your infernal low profession. Why don’t you take to six and eightpence at once! But I tell you this, when your three terms are out you *shall* go, my fine gentleman. I am sick of you. You are too fine for me. I didn’t look fine when I was scraping money together to build the room you are now sitting in.”

“But,” said the youth, mildly, “I never

can understand, sir. Would you not have me get wealth and prosperity by the same road which you yourself took?"

"Don't talk to me, sir. I don't want your quibbling here. You are not one of them yet—a precious one you *will* make. No more about it now."

The girl who was thus declined was, indeed, a "heavy" creature, a little uncouth it must be said, with awkward curls, and an awkward sheepish look, and an awkward way of putting out her hand, as if she expected to have to draw it back with quickness to avoid a smart blow. The refusal was told to her father, who received it in the "course of business," much as though some one had declined some fifty of his Dutch casks; and was then told to her, who became more awkward and scared than ever.

The name of the eldest son was Charles. (Sir Charles Bruce and Lady Mary Bruce, announced in a doorway before a dinner-

party, would sound handsomely.) The name of the second was Chester. He had announced that he wished to go to the Bar, which his father said was “a d—d sneaking, pettifogging profession;” but added, that “he did not care much—that he might go and be a Tailor if he liked.”

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE LOVELANDS.

ON one morning, in Mr. Bruce's mail-bag, was found a letter from Lady Mantower, written on cheap, shabby paper. For that person of quality was particularly mean and shabby in all her dealings, and rather brought discredit on her order. She lived meanly, and in a mean place, and a favourite device of hers was borrowing small sums of money from small and foolish persons whom she never paid, and driving about in cabs or carriages hired by the same class. She was selfish, narrow, shabby,

plebeian, and dishonest, in everything that bore upon others ; griping, greedy, extravagant in everything that related to herself. For her the Bruce family was a welcome prize.

On this morning she wrote down to say that she had great news—that she desired to see Mr. Bruce privately—as she had something of importance to tell him. The letter was marked “Private,” which pleased the master of the house immensely. After breakfast, his open barouche came round, and was presently rolling and curling along the serpent-shaped drive, smooth as a line of rails—had spun out between the great gate piers, and had presently come “dashing” up on the rough stones before the door of the station, which it ground into powder. There he was received with prodigious respect, though he always resented the process of taking his ticket ; though he would have liked to have had *that* on credit, like every other article furnished to

his establishment, with the bill to be sent in twice a year.

In Town he went straight to Lady Mantower's mean lodgings. That wise lady kept him in his place. She was wise enough to know that it was her only restraint. Every relation towards him she contrived to turn into a favour; even her month's residence at Brucetowers. At times she would hardly take the trouble to disguise her contempt for him. She received him with a cross languor. "I have been waiting in," she said. "You are late, Mr. Bruce."

He was always humble and uncomfortable before her, and used "my lady" profusely.

"I came straight from the railway," he said, "my lady. The train was late. I know what punctuality should be, and paid dearly for learning, and——"

Lady Mantower's face began to pinch and squeeze and contract. "I know about that," she said; "please don't, we haven't time for those things now. The point is—

you consulted me about marrying your son."

"Exactly," he said, "my lady. It is what I want. I am proud to say I can give him——"

"Let me finish," she said; "it is for your own interest, you will understand. Or, if you prefer to tell me about yourself, of course I must listen."

"I beg your pardon, Lady Mantower," he said, with abject humility; "I did not mean, indeed. I know you are interested in us——"

"It is quite for yourself—altogether a concern of your own. I object very much to mixing myself in such business. It is unpleasant for me, and disagreeable things may be said. Well now, listen to me, Mr. Bruce. I think something could be done, you understand. But it is all quite for yourself, recollect."

"I know, indeed," he replied, "you are most kind——"

Lady Mantower shook her head impatiently. "I really don't want this sort of thing," she said. "Pray listen now—for it is important for yourself. Why should I mix myself up in such things? Just listen. There's Lord Loveland—a fine family—good old stock, and that sort of thing. They have just come to Town. I know them, and I think they would be easy to know. I should manage that. They are old friends of mine. If you were in Town now, and on the spot——"

"O, to be sure," said he, eagerly; "we shall come up at once—break up our country establishment—take a Town house——"

"I see it is hopeless," said Lady Mantower; "you will neither wait nor listen. You are not wanted to take those wild hasty steps. Why should you break up your country house?" (Why indeed!—at least, as viewed from the Mantower point of view.)

Mr. Bruce again became penitent and

silent. It now flashed upon him that his best course was to be wholly silent.

"It is a mere chance," she went on; "they might not look at you. I speak candidly, for your own good. People don't go into the exchanges and buy wives, as you do stock or other things in trade. It may never come to anything. But they are very good-natured people, and there is a chance, with time and opportunity. Lord Loveland is a true aristocrat, and sensitive, so you must be cautious. I will bring you together, and you must carry on the rest yourself; only I stipulate expressly, there must be no forward, rough, cutting short of matters, or—coming to the point at once. This I require distinctly, for my own sake. And I really think there seems a probability—a real probability. Well? Don't you—have you nothing to say for this trouble of mine?"

Eagerly Mr. Bruce broke out. Naturally he was embarrassed, for his speech had been

found disagreeable. Now he was all gratitude—and gratitude in confusion.

In a fortnight or three weeks the Town house had been “mounted.” The open barouche and fine horses were rolling about Town. It was to be read in the papers that the proprietor of Brucetowers and “suite” had arrived at their Town mansion.

The picture that Lady Mantower had drawn of the indifference of Lord Loveland in this business, was scarcely true. That nobleman was a very needy nobleman, with five or six Honourable Messrs. and Misses Loveland to support. His title was his “little all,” and on it he raised moneys and dinners. It almost brought him clothing; at least, there were plenty of people, who, if the usages of society would have allowed of their “treating” him in that way, would have “asked him” to a complete Suit, as they would to a dinner. To these latter he went very often, putting on his title, as it might be his white tie, and carrying it up-

stairs with him to the drawing-room, where it was taken from him by the servant, and made to explode noisily among the guests.

Indifferent! So far from Lady Mantower having any merit in the business, it was he who, with great anxiety, made out this rich prize, and marked him for at least a daughter. It was "just the thing," he thought; it was he who stirred and moved Lady Mantower in the business. He caused her to see the scheme with the keen eye of interest.

This specimen of the fine old reduced English nobleman lived as cheaply and as shabbily as a reduced nobleman could well live; that is, in a cheap house, in a cheap square, in a cheap quarter. But he hung out the title in front like a flag, and it covered all the cheapness and shabbiness. That the internal economy of the mansion should have been mean and shabby did not much concern those outside, for the reduced nobleman never "saw" any one—excepting at "any one's" *own* houses,

whither he was always glad to go out affably enough, and whither notes were sent, stating that "Lord Loveland and Miss Loveland had the honour to accept Mr. and Mrs. Motleybird's kind invitation to dinner for the —th inst."

At the festival the noble and reduced lord stood upon the rug, with his hand under the collar of his waistcoat; and during the dinner talked very fluently, in a sort of quiet stream, and rather encouraged a quiet familiarity with his guests. Having thus let out his title and his conversation on hire, as it were, for the night, he took them away with him carefully at the end of the night. These were the only terms upon which his services could be secured; and it was at dinners—and at dinners only—that he tolerated the advances of the inferior orders.

Very soon Lady Mantower had written Mr. Bruce a note, asking him to call on her, as she wanted him to do a little commission

for her; and while she was talking to Mr. Bruce, Lord Loveland and his daughter "dropped" in for a morning visit. Mr. Bruce noticed the surprise of the reduced lord—his almost shyness—and his half-expressed wish to retire at once: he did not suspect that the meeting had been regularly planned. Though this was not a dinner (the only terms on which the nobleman was to be approached), nothing could have been more friendly and accessible. The two stood together on the rug, and Lord Loveland (with his hand under his waistcoat, as if he were at the table of the House of Commons, "bringing in" a Government measure) received Mr. Bruce's views with the eagerness of a student. Very often, however, that gentleman's eyes wandered over to the tall, cold, and rather graceful girl who sat with Lady Mantower.

Her face was very white and fair, and she spoke very little. Though she was dressed "cheaply," as it would be called,

still her "clothes" were put on well, and had a handsome air. She looked down with a sort of contempt at old Lady Mantower beside her, who was cobbling at an ancient bag, old and "raddled" as herself; for Lady Mantower did not fill up her time with the more elegant lady's work, and did not think it unbecoming her order in presence of company.

In a week or ten days Mr. Bruce received instructions to "construct" a dinner-party on the largest scale. "You can do it or not, as you please," said Lady Mantower, in the grudging, almost offensive, way with which she gave all her instructions. "I only tell you, you know. It is no affair of mine, you see. Very likely they won't come to you, and I can't help it if they don't. You had better try them, though."

However, as usual, "Lord Loveland and Miss Loveland had the honour to accept Mr. Bruce's kind invitation to dinner for the —th inst."

Then the decks were cleared, and the family plate disinterred, and a large rather mixed company invited. Lady Mantower came too, in what one of the guests called a sort of "tow-row" cap, and of whom another guest was heard asking irreverently, "who was that old dust in the corner?"—so little do the mere externals of rank impress the herd.

Lord Loveland had arrived in a cab, just as had some of the other properties of the feast; was carried up-stairs and distributed among the guests. Lord Loveland—more ministerial than ever—"brought in bills" on the rug, and fluently explained things in general to honourable members about him. His figure was capital for such an occasion: tall, wiry, grey, and with an air of worn diplomacy.

The dinner went forward with magnificent progress. The table shone with gold and silver and flowers. The familiar épergne of "solid silver" reflected (and

elongated) the face of the peer; and Mr. Bruce told complacently how he had secured it, and put the stones of Brucetowers all together by his own honest labour. The lord was immensely interested. "This," he said, addressing the House right and left, "is what makes us what we are" ("we" was the empire). "This is what makes our influence felt from pole to pole. This is what makes us"—a great many other things, in short, which the peer enumerated with wonderful fluency.

The Honourable Clara Loveland, pale, white, cold, and utterly indifferent, had been "taken in" by the heir and hope of the house, Charles. That youth—foolish, voluble—was sadly embarrassed with his charge. In ten minutes the Honourable Clara had read him, weighed him to an ounce, and discovered that he was empty, and vulgarly purse-proud to a degree. This impression he strengthened in her by waving his gold and his silver and all his

properties in her eyes, until at last she seemed morally to turn her back upon him.

The dinner proceeded. The peer talked, and may be said to have given very handsome value for his entertainment. Mr. Bruce listened, at his feet, as it were, with an opulent humility. It was a sort of new life—a new sensation—this treating a peer, consuming and enjoying a real peer. The real peer, as affable, as quiet and tranquil as if he were made of the common mould, distributed himself very impartially among the crowd, and went away at night early, before the rest, leaving them his noble blessing. “I am so glad to know you,” he said to Mr. Bruce. “I hope to know you better; more below the surface, you understand; I go home, I assure you, a wiser and a better man, as they say in the stories. We have enjoyed ourselves, Clara and I, we can’t say how much. Have we not, Clara?”

The Honourable Clara now being draped and clothed by young Bruce, said with utter

indifference, "Certainly, papa," and firmly drew herself away from these attentions. Mr. Bruce, suffused with happiness, did not note this unsatisfactory state of things; but returned to the drawing-room with swimming eyes and swelling bosom. "Charming person," he said; "I had a great mind to ask him down to Brucetowers. I am sure he would come." He might have been quite sure of the fact; for later, when Lady Mantower had said, She was only speaking for his (Mr. Bruce's) good, and that he might do as he pleased, or not, just as he pleased; and that it was no concern of hers, but that if he would take *her* advice, he would ask the Loveland party "down," Mr. Bruce accordingly did ask him, not in person, but in a letter, in which he struck the chords of "my lord," and "your lordship," over and over again, in thirds, and fifths, and octaves. He liked the sound.

Lord Loveland actually came to see him

in reply. Called in an easy natural Commoner way, walking like an ordinary Christian.

"Bruce," he said, "this is very kind, very good of you. Fact is, I never go on visits. If I once began it, I should have to go from one to the other of them. I should break down—I couldn't do it. But, I tell you what, if I thought it wouldn't be known or published in the papers, and made a flourish of, I declare I should like to see your place. I have half a mind to go with you, Mr. Bruce."

Again, ready to prostrate himself on his Turkey rug before this really kind and affable nobleman, Mr. Bruce said, joyfully :

"Then, my lord, I understand that your lordship will come?"

"I declare I must; it is foolish, after all, binding ourselves by vows of this kind. Clara is always at me. And now about what time would you take us in, hey Bruce? What day would suit you for this invasion, hey now?"

This was the delightful liberty, equality, and fraternity view for which the lord was so deservedly celebrated. It quite overpowered Mr. Bruce.

"Any time, my lord," he said, "that would suit your lordship's convenience."

"Say next week," said my lord. "The Newbolds are dining us, and the Ridleys—old Sir Charles, you know—but we can get rid of them. By the way, when we go back to Lovelands, and have the house bursting with company, you must meet Sir Charles. You are just the man he would hug—positively hug."

Again delighted, Mr. Bruce would have liked to have lain down upon the Turkey rug. The prospect of filling Lovelands to bursting was very remote indeed, as that mansion was under the control of the Court of Chancery; and it was hoped, as soon as the deliberate progress of that tribunal would permit, that it would be happily brought to market.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

DOWN AT BRUCETOWERS.

THE arrangements were soon perfected. The Town establishment was broken up, and the Bruce family rushed down to the country again. Old Lady Mantower, who had, indeed, virtually invited herself, came in a sort of aggrieved way, as if she were forced into doing something that was most disagreeable to her feelings. There was no one else in the house. This had been stipulated. "Let us be quiet, my dear Bruce," said the lord. "Let us have the neighbours, by all means; I like to come to know the honest yeomen who constitute England's true greatness. I like to meet them, man

to man, and interchange ideas." Though, when it did come to meeting as man to man, the lordly ideas were sent out freely; but none were received in exchange.

There were, therefore, many banquets, at which the lord was shown. Nothing could be "nicer" than his behaviour; he was so gallant to the country ladies. For the men, he stood at the House of Commons table, addressing them, bringing in bills, making "statements," and moving resolutions generally for an awestruck House. The Honourable Clara was even more cold and contemptuous and indifferent in the country than she was in Town.

The very day of their arrival was celebrated by a "state banquet." The more distinguished neighbours were bidden. Young Bruce was elated, having "taken down" the Honourable Clara, and feeling that the eyes of neighbouring "squireens" were upon him. Even domestic country history repeats itself; and there is always sure

to be the typical superior family—gentleer, but not so rich as the Bruces. These were asked solemnly “to meet Lord Loveland,” and had that nobleman swung into their faces, dashed up and down before their eyes, and heaped on their heads like coals of fire. It was wonderful the effect of that public retribution: it was noted that, in a certain sense, they never raised their heads after.

Young Chester Bruce, the would-be barrister, came down from his books, and now saw the lord and his daughter for the first time. To him the lord was very kind and affable. “The Bar is a fine profession,” he said, on the rug, and addressing the House more than the youth. “Nowhere are there such rich prizes—but how many looking for them? Take the church, take the army, take the medical profession—it all comes to nearly the same.” (He did not say what was to be done with these callings when you had “taken” them.) “Some of these days, when we get you to Lovelands,

I shall show our young friend here a picture or two of an ancestor or so of ours who were on the Bench in the time of Charles." Setting aside the problematical character of this visit, the exhibition of the legal ancestor or two was almost impossible, there being a belief abroad that they had been long since removed under the stringent operation of a "bill of sale."

Chester Bruce listened with humility to this exhortation, and said that he hoped to rise in time, and win one of the few prizes; and then saw the eyes of the Honourable Clara fixed on him with what seemed to him utter scorn.

"Clara," said the lord, "this is Mr. Chester Bruce, who one of these days means to sit in Our House on the wool-sack, hearing appeals from the superior courts of law and equity. I shall take care, if Providence spares me, to be in Our House on that occasion. And I stipulate now—before witnesses, mind—that I am to

be one of his godfathers, as it were, and introduce him on that occasion to Our House—mind.”

Chester Bruce being presently passed on to Miss Loveland, said quickly to her, “I see you don’t believe in that future. Neither does my father; nor any one, indeed, but myself.”

“I wasn’t thinking about the matter at all,” said the Honourable Clara, calmly.

“How stupid of me,” said young Chester; “that serves me right. I live too much with Smith and his ‘Leading Cases,’ and the ‘Vendors and Purchasers’ of the great Sugden.”

A cold smile came into Miss Loveland’s face. “Dreary company, I should say,” she answered. “But you are right to believe in yourself.”

“What can you do,” said he, with confidence, “with no one else to believe in you? It is the only thing that keeps me up. As for Lord Chancellor, and that sort of thing, I don’t look to that exactly; but

there are smaller prizes that will do me very well. I dare say you believe in yourself too; but, unfortunately, there are no prizes for ladies."

More neighbours now came in, and with them the elder Bruce, who came to Miss Loveland as to his proper prey. The second brother retired. The Honourable Clara looked after him with curiosity, and turned from the elder with impatience. Then the procession was formed, and the grand solemnity set in which for so many years has repeated itself, and will repeat itself in all its incidents.

Chester Bruce was seated opposite his brother and the Honourable Clara, with only the solid silver centre ornament between, which had latterly become a sort of solid silver Wandering Jew—never being allowed to rest in one spot, but being always on the road. He saw athwart its molten branches the cold look of weariness upon her face, and the struggles of his brother, who, quite unconscious, was talking of his money, and

what he would buy and *could* buy. In the midst of which she suddenly startled Chester Bruce by saying, across the *épergne*:

"The Lord Chancellor finds this rather dull, and a waste of time."

The brother laughed loudly. "Very good, Miss Loveland—uncommon good. He is always mooning. Infernal trade to choose, isn't it? The governor's dead against it. Infernal ungentlemanly to be groping in chambers, and bags, and wigs, and that sort of thing. It's only the low people do it."

Chester Bruce coloured at this "rallying." He darted a reproachful look at Miss Loveland.

"See how angry the learned counsel is," she said.

"I am not in the court," said Chester, calmly, and turned to speak to an elderly country lady near him. He was thinking what a heartless, cold creature this was that had come on a visit to them.

After dinner he withdrew silently, and went up-stairs to "Addison on Contracts," and to the agreeable Smith of the "Leading Cases." This he thought was his happy sphere. His room was up "in the Tower," very far from the haunts of men. Suddenly he heard the swing doors "banging," and the shuffle of feet, and his brother came bursting in.

"What are you doing here?" he said. "It is cursed rude of you—infernal disrespectful. That's not the way to treat a lord, to be 'holeing' up in this place. Come down at once. Even Miss Loveland says as much as that 'you are a boor.'"

"I don't want to go down to them," said the other, colouring again. "I don't want to hear their remarks; and I don't know how to meet them. It is not fair."

"Come down, I say," said the other; "you must. It's infernal rude. Try and behave like a gentleman. The governor will come for you himself, if you don't."

He put aside the gentle "Addison" with a sigh, and came down. The brother led him in triumphantly. The fact was, he found that he gathered importance from having this instrument to play upon.

"Here he is," he cried; "here is the Lord Chancellor! I've got him. Look, Miss Loveland. The Lord Chancellor!"

Chester Bruce broke from his brother, colouring again. Miss Loveland just lifted her eyes from a book of prints, and dropped them again.

"Now that we have got you down," said the elder brother, "why don't you say or do something, eh, my Lord Chancellor? What a capital name, eh, Miss Loveland? How clever of you! We have been laughing ever since."

The younger brother looked at her with a wounded expression and deep reproach. Suddenly the cold face became warm—fires were lit up in the chill grate.

"Nothing of the kind," she said, indig-

nantly. "I laugh at nobody. I give no one names; at least, I do not mean to do so. Come here, Mr. Chester. Here is a book of photographs. Come over and explain, and give a lecture on each, and forgive us for calling you Lord Chancellor."

Chester did as he was desired. The brother looked at them both—wondering, yet curbed. Chester, half offended, half pleased, went up reluctantly, sat down beside her, and began to "lecture" on the pictures.

That was Lane Phipps, county member—that was Mrs. Lane Phipps—the two Miss Lane Phippses next. Monboddo Price, who *would* be member. Lord Polestar. They did not know the Polestars: but this (privately speaking) had been purchased. Lady Polestar. Honourable Julia Arden, their daughter. Honourable Noel Arden, son, ditto. In the midst of which Lord Loveland, flourishing, flowing, waving, saw the state of things, and leading on the

question to one of reference, called out, "Clara! (She knows all about it.) Who did Lightliver marry? One of the Hopkines? Ah, yes, she was at the wedding; she will amuse you. Tell Mr. Bruce, Clara, about Harry Lightliver and his wedding. Go over to her, it will make you die."

Mr. Bruce went over awkwardly, and drew a chair, but the story was not likely to make him die.

"These things," she said, coldly, "are always exaggerated. It seemed to me an ordinary wedding."

"Ah, but you tell it so well, I am sure—I know it," said he, gallantly.

"You have never heard me tell a story, and I never *do* tell stories," she said.

Chester Bruce had moved away. The other brother was "sulking" over at the piano. There are many men in whose case "preference" is injury. The more sensitive natures even feel their inferiority—as to "a look" given to another in pre-

ference—like an east wind. He withdrew—turned over a book, and looked across, glowering. He felt that he was injured in some way: and injured because he was inferior. That night went out, and the squires, “squireens,” their wives, cousins, and daughters, dispersed, the noble lord “playing them out,” as it were, with a sort of fluent anthem.

For the next two or three days young Chester kept in his rooms; his brother and he had had some discussion that night. The elder complained very unreasonably to the father.

“Can’t he keep to his infernal books, and not be sticking his nose in where he is not wanted; interrupting a man when he wants to speak, and watching a man, and thrusting himself in when another man is coming up. It’s infernal, so it is. Can’t you keep to your old musty books; can’t you?”

“But,” said the other, mildly, “you

came up to me and literally forced me down."

The father listened with glaring eyes and swelling cheeks. "I said it," he said, "and I suspected it. I won't have it, I tell you, in *my* house. When you are set up in your What-do-you-call-em Chambers you can do as you like, sir. No sneaking tricks here, sir."

The son said nothing; but though he kept close to his legal friends, up-stairs in his room, servants and others who would enter found him in a reflective attitude, with his head resting upon his white hand, and not at all absorbed by Addison and Coke. Those who did *not* enter, could never speculate that he used to waste a great deal of time in that thoughtful but idle attitude, or that his eyes wandered away dreamily from the stony, arid country that spread out before him, to a softer landscape. Perhaps he was thinking of the warm colours of the great House, of

the gold and frescoes and stained glass, where he would be sitting in a Gothic chair, with perhaps his knees dappled over with the rich crimsons and yellows and blues, and he himself hearing appeals.

He came down to dinner and breakfast, but retired quietly after those meals were done. The lord was very pleasant on these withdrawals.

"Determined, I see," he said; "his mind positively made up. They'll have to give it to him, I know they will. A man that sticks to it like that, is not to be put off. You will soon have to think of choosing a title!—ah! ah! And I really know nothing more delightful. I can look back now—I don't know how many years—to the evening—I was a small child in petticoats then—when my father came in with the news." (The late Lord Loveland was the First Lord, and had been "raised to the peerage" for some naval service.)

Lord Loveland affected to know, not a

little, but a good deal, of everything. Law—magistrates' law—he was very familiar with. "You know, we have these things coming before us, by way of appeal," he said. "I sit very often myself." (He did not acknowledge the practice of referring the matter exclusively to the "law lords.")

A country gentleman after dinner, who thought that *he* also knew law, because *he* heard appeals on the bench, was glad to discuss some point with Lord Loveland.

"I think you are wrong there," said his lordship, on the rug, "a little wrong. You know, we have these points coming before us weekly. I hear Wellclose, and Lambey, and the whole common law gang, hammering away at it until I am sick. I ought to know."

"But you see, my lord, this is a magistrate's case; *our* business, in fact," said the other, deprecatingly.

"Well! where is Chitty, or Fearne, or Comyn, or Hales' 'Pleas of the Crown?'"

said Lord Loveland, taking in the most discordant branches of law. "I will stand or fall by them. Bring them down."

"But," said the country gentleman, "there are the regular 'Magistrates' Cases,' and it would be better to look in to *that*, my lord. We should find the very point. It's the proper book."

"Well, I am for the old wells of Common Law, pure and undefiled," said the lord, with resignation; "for old Chitty, and Croke Elizabeth. But no matter. Or stay; refer, if you like, to the Lord Chancellor. Send up to him. He will rule with me."

Chester was fetched down.

"Here is the Chancellor in his robes," said Miss Loveland. "Now for wisdom."

He looked wonderingly round at them all.

"Now," said his lordship to the country gentleman, "*you* state the point, and your *own* way. Take every advantage. I stand by old Coke."

The country gentleman did state the

point, with more clearness than the noble lord would have done. Chester listened to them both.

“O!” said he, when he had done, “that is the view. It is an old point, and settled centuries ago. I could show it to you.”

“But where?” said the lord; “that is the point.”

“O, in a hundred books. Broome, for instance.”

“Ay,” said Lord Loveland; “but what does Hales say?” (He always added an “s” to the great lawyer.) “What does Coke——”

“Nothing, I should say.”

“Ah, *you* should say,” said the lord. “Well, let us see this Broome—this new Broome—whom you expect to sweep so clean—ha! ha!”

“It is on my table, open,” said Chester, waving a letter.

“Fetch him,” said Lord Loveland; “bring down the Broome. Quick!”

Suddenly the youth coloured.

“No! no! I forgot. I made a mistake.”

"Ah! ah! I thought so," said Lord Loveland. "Old Hales for ever. Fetch him down—fetch him down! Let us see him."

"No, no!" said Chester, in distress; "I didn't mean Broome—that is——"

"We must see him. It is no use. I am determined on it."

The brother, who was watching, said eagerly, "I'll settle it!" and ran out of the room, up-stairs.

In sore distress, Chester would have gone after him, but he was stopped. Miss Loveland seemed to enjoy the thing immensely.

"The Chancellor is afraid of his opinion being reversed!" she said.

Presently appeared the brother, bearing in Broome. "It was open on his desk," he said; "and see, this is the way the Lord Chancellor spends his time, drawing figures and faces; nice study, ain't it? He'll be cutting the desks next, like we did at school."

All faces were now bent over Broome, admiring the work of the unhappy Chester.

"Very fair—very fair indeed," said Lord Loveland, "and dictated by a nice artistic feeling."

"Won't you let *me* see," said Miss Loveland, after some time; and the eldest son bore it over to her triumphantly.

Again Chester made a protest.

"What *are* you at," said his brother, roughly; "what bother you give one. I am sure you ought to be complimented. Now, what's this—a woman's head, with curls and that sort of thing? Taste, ain't it?"

Soon he got tired; and Miss Loveland absorbed in Broome. He often approached and tried to get it from her; but she kept it.

"Come here, Mr. Chester," she said; "explain, please. Give a lecture upon these faces. There seems a family likeness running through them all."

Again confused, Chester could not answer.

"Verses, too—writing! So this is the way we study. Come over here, Mr. Chester, and explain Broome to me!"

Lord Loveland and the country gentleman were now miles away in another direction. His lordship was enlarging on some other topic, say agriculture. He had left Broome behind. Still he often said to the country gentleman, with easy triumph, "You see, after all, nothing like old Hales on most things. I have a sort of instinct for the right view. You understand?"

Timorously, the young lawyer had now drawn near to Miss Loveland. He had sat down beside her.

"She is going to roast him," said young Bruce to another country gentleman. "O, she's a wonderful hand at that!"

But the roasting that was going on was not exactly what he fancied. If asking young Chester what was the meaning of the likeness that ran through most of these pen-

cilled faces was roasting, he was right. If pleasant doubts, pleasant guesses as to the original of that face, was "roasting," he was again right. Young Chester sat there half an hour enduring this roasting.

But a few days later, Miss Loveland, growing colder and colder every hour, treated the heir of the house with open insult and contumely. The youth one night resented this, almost with tears.

"You go on so," he said. "It is a shame, and you know it is. None of the other young women about here behave in that way. They are always pleased when I am civil to them, and I can tell you I am not civil to everybody."

Miss Loveland laughed.

"I have remarked that," she said, with a curl of her lip. "I must do you that justice. But what is this extraordinary grievance? It amazes me. I declare I thought it was some of the children at home

coming to complain of Tom, or Jack, or Mary, for pinching them."

"There you go again," he said. "You are very strong at sharp speeches. You won't be civil to me."

"I am civil to everybody," she answered, "on principle. To the lowest countryman on your estate."

"Ah!" said he, in fresh protest, "there it is again. You mean something. But I tell you what, I shall go to your papa. He won't like it, I can tell you. You know he doesn't. You know very well what he wants, and what he wishes, and why he has come down here. It is very good and condescending, and all that sort of thing."

"AND WHY?" she said, turning on him with a look he did not forget for long after—"why, pray? Tell me, please. I should be glad to know. Now, on the spot, at this moment. Quick!"

She stood up suddenly, and looked at him with such contempt and insolence, that he turned away his eyes.

“What do you mean?” she said. “I will ask you to explain your allusions now and at once, or I give you fair notice I shall ask you to-day at the dinner-table before the whole house. So you may choose.”

He was quite frightened.

“I meant nothing, indeed I did not. I beg your pardon. You catch a man up so.”

“Meant nothing, and yet ask my pardon!” she said, scornfully. “How consistent! You *did* mean something, and I know perfectly what you *did* mean. But I must make allowance, I suppose. How could I expect in you—not the sense that birth gives, for, thank Heaven, I am above any pride of *that* sort!—but even the delicacy that the most ordinary man with anything like a manly nature would acquire in going through the world!”

"I suppose like Chester," he said, trembling with rage.

"Yes," she said, "like Chester, as you say. You might imitate him a little, and it would do you no harm. *He* would have cut his tongue out before venturing on the unworthy insinuations that came from *your* lips to-day. *He* would have dropped down and died where you are standing sooner than have uttered such a thing to a lady. Yes, like Chester! He is gentle and kind, and delicate and noble——"

"O, Miss Loveland!" said a faltering voice from the door. And both starting, saw a figure filled with confusion, and with downcast eyes, standing in miserable confusion. It was Chester himself, with his finger between the leaves of "Addison on Contracts." Yet there was an elation in his eyes. The other brother stamped with fury.

"Look at him!" he said, maliciously; "he has been listening, and has heard it! I wish him joy. I wish both joy. 'Pon

my word! How charming! Suppose I tell everybody at dinner to-day. Eh, Miss Loveland, whose turn is it now?"

It was, indeed, *his* turn. But the younger brother stepped forward quite calm and decided.

"For shame," he said; "we are worrying Miss Loveland. Our country ways annoy her. Come with me, brother, I want to speak to you. Come."

"I shall not go with you," said the brother, shaking him off. "I have something else to do. Something that Miss——Loveland shall hear of presently. Now, mind, I shall show everybody I am not to be made a fool of!"

"O, Charles, for shame!" said the other.

"How dare you speak to me in that way?" said the eldest, quite in a fury. "Let me pass!"

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

A HELPING HAND.

CHARLES was allowed to pass, and he rushed away, leaving the two others behind. Chester Bruce, filled with confusion, did not speak for a time.

"I am so grateful," he said at last. "It is so kind of you. Such words from you."

She turned on *him* now. He was not a very skilled or judicious lawyer as yet. "Words of course," she said, coldly. "When one is excited and angry with one person, another is seen in better colours. Your brother goes a little too far sometimes."

Chester was not yet called, but a look down at "Addison on Contracts" seemed to inspire him.

"Exactly," he said. "When we are provoked, we often like to irritate a person by praises of another. Still I am obliged all the same for your even using me for such a purpose."

She gave him a look of gratitude and even astonishment. Another would have dragged them both down into the quagmire of a sentimental situation.

"You are going to the Bar," she said, with a smile, "and I am sure you will succeed. I hope so."

He was confused again. "I don't expect to do so; I have nothing to encourage me, to cheer me. Since you have come here, I dare say you have noticed that I am more or less alone in this house. They don't care for me here. These," he said, looking down on Addison, "are the only friends I can trust."

"But," she said, softly, "this is your own fault. You do not lay yourself out to make friends. You do not trust people. You suspect everybody, I fear. Of these nights

you fly away to your room. You do not care to talk to us. We are all below you—below the future Lord Chancellor.”

“Ah!” said he, sadly, “*you* join in that! No wonder that I am suspicious, and fly from society. Everybody has this blow at me.”

“No, not at all,” she said, eagerly, and very softly. “Dismiss that notion. I understand you, and feel for you. I am not the cold creature you take me for. I seem to know you. Tell me about yourself, perhaps I could help you. I am supposed to know the world. But you would not confide in me. The future lawyer is too proud—too superior.”

He lifted his eyes to hers, and coloured. “O, Miss Loveland,” he said, “you are too indulgent—too kind. These are the best words of comfort I have heard for many a long day. They are very sweet in my ears. I should like it indeed. Your advice would be welcome, and most precious.”

He was getting very eager and very ex-

cited, when they heard a cheerful step at the door, and a cheerful voice spoke to them.

“Hey, now, Lord Chancellor? Case for the prosecution and Consultation! And, master counsellor, neglecting your studies. Well, as the late Bishop Stinger used to say when he was my master at Eton, ‘young men will be young men,’ not, you see, boys, according to the common shape. He knew human nature well, did Stinger. It was very nicely put, that. It always struck me. ‘Young men will be young men!’ Clara, my child, a moment.”

The moment spent with Clara, his child, was beaten out into half an hour. Some one met Clara, his child, coming from that interview, with some colour in her cheeks, and walking with a haughty, hasty step.

Lord Loveland was in delightful humour that night. After dinner he said, suddenly, “Do you know, I have been thinking a great deal lately of our friend the Lord Chancellor. I think we ought all to put our

shoulders to the wheel for him, and do something. I am not one of those who talk. No, I should say not. Now, of all coincidences in the world, do you know who I got a letter from this morning? Meiklejohn, the serjeant. Of course you know him. I suppose he could make his bed every night in his briefs; but he writes to me now and then—wonderful creature. The moment I got his letter, I said to myself the words ‘Chester Bruce;’ and after that, the words ‘Lord Chancellor.’ What do you say to that?”

No one was ready with a reply, so he went on:

“Don’t you see? A sort of Providence. The very thing. Nothing could have turned out so well. We must send our young friend to Meiklejohn. Any young friend that Meiklejohn merely looks at out of the corner of his eye, is made—made, sir! Meiklejohn likes me, knows me—God knows why—but he will do that much for our young

friend. When I got his letter, I said to myself, 'Pon my soul, I begin to think there is something in our little joke about the woolsack.' I do indeed. I am very glad of it. I am indeed, Bruce. I like to see a *willing* young fellow encouraged."

Every one now began to look at Chester with an eye of congratulation, but not one could understand distinctly.

"We must talk about this after dinner," said his lordship, mysteriously. "Leave it to me, privately, you, I, and papa."

"Seriously," he said, after dinner, resuming the subject, "I think it should not be allowed to slip. Such things do not crop up every night. I am interested for our young friend. I would lose no time, if I were he."

"I would not," said old Mr. Bruce, "and he certainly shall not, my lord."

"But I don't see," said Chester, doubtfully. "Does he wish to take me as a pupil, if so——"

"Wish!" said Lord Loveland, laughing with pity; "Meiklejohn wish! I suppose he does not dream of your being in esse, my dear child. He has too many things to fill his mind. He knows me. He knows that I am interested in A, B, or C, that I usually *am* interested in an A, B, or C. O no. I should *say* he is *scarcely* familiar with the reputation of our future Chancellor."

"But," said Chester, "I don't follow yet. What is it, then, I am to take advantage of?"

"Chester!" said Mr. Bruce.

"No matter," said Lord Loveland, gaily. "We must be legal with our friend, and speak by the card. Don't I tell you that the man Meiklejohn *looks* at is made? He is willing to look—ergo, you can draw the conclusion yourself. Now, is *that* satisfactory?"

"Well, since you ask me, Lord Loveland," said Chester, blankly, "I say no.

What does this looking at amount to, in practical sense? for I suppose it to be a metaphor."

"Taking you by the hand, giving you a lift, mentioning your name, in short, in that sort of assistance which to a man of the world is so precious. Of course he won't give you money—no, I should say he couldn't do *that*. But another man would know that, to be seen in his company two seconds, is worth a guinea. However, you don't see it in that light; so we'll say no more."

"But he does see it—he shall see it—he *must* see it, my lord," said Mr. Bruce, coarsely. "I am ashamed of him. He shall see it in any light you choose. He shall see it at once—or I shall know the reason why. What do you mean, sir?"

"All I meant," said Lord Loveland, humbly, "was to give him a letter to Meiklejohn. Not on your own merits, I tell you frankly. At that dinner you would meet, say, an Attorney-General, say, a So-

licitor-General, say, a Queen's advocate, say, a Lord Chancellor, say, er—any person of the description useful to know. You sit next, say, an Attorney-General, or, say, a Queen's advocate. You talk to them, they take a fancy to you. He asks, say, the Lord Chancellor, 'Who is that intelligent young fellow who made that shrewd remark on the seizure of *The William Simpson*?' He will be told—Meiklejohn will take care of that. Then he will say, 'There is the counsel to the Inland Revenue vacant, why shouldn't *he* have it?' Why, if I were you, on such a chance I'd set off this very night."

"And he *shall* set off," said Mr. Bruce, quite dazzled by the picture just drawn. "Not a moment's delay, sir. Go and pack, sir."

"O, I am only joking," said Lord Loveland. "We mustn't be taken so literally as that. I mean, we must have time, you know, to get our things together."

Chester looked from one to the other, wondering. He could not follow. The next morning his father came to him.

"I have been thinking over Lord Loveland's excellent advice," he said. "Nothing could be more suitable than that about *The William Simpson*; and, in short, you must go. You must not lose the chance."

"But *what* chance, sir," said the son, impatiently; "is it possible that you are taken in by those unmeaning platitudes?"

"Platitudes, sir!" said the man, in a frenzy. "How dare you—how dare you speak of my friend in that way? I tell you what, I see what your game is, and so do we all. Don't think you can hoodwink me. And it's cursed shabby and ungentlemanly, *I* can tell you."

The young man coloured

"You don't mean, father——"

"Yes, I do. They are all talking of it. I wonder you are not ashamed. But I tell you plainly, I'll spoil it. There's fair notice to you."

Young Chester drew himself up. "I am ready to go at any moment," he said. "Not to profit by the dreams Lord Loveland is pleased to set before me, but to show you I am above any such mean designs as you impute to me. I shall go to-morrow."

"Well, to-morrow, or next day," said his father, a little softened; "that will do. You see it is a great opening for Charles, and we must not throw it away."

It was known presently in the house that Chester was going away. Lord Loveland said he admired the man's spirit—he really did, now.

That evening the youth was walking in the garden with a mournful air, when he saw Miss Loveland coming towards him. He was turning away awkwardly, when she called to him.

"I am sorry," he said, "but I must go and get my things together. They are sending me away, you see."

"It is what you like," said she, "is it

not? You are eager—burning to commence what is called the battle of life—vulgarly called. Your soul is in your profession, is it not?—another hackneyed phrase.”

He coloured at this. “Well,” he said, “Miss Loveland will not miss me, at all events——”

She stopped him very quickly—almost with a look.

“I mean,” he went on, “she will want some one now to be pleasant upon, and witty, and severe.”

“O, *that* was it,” she said, smiling. “That is my department, is it? Why should you be so unjust? Or, why should one, going to a profession like yours, not have the common discrimination to distinguish between mere idle talk—the stuff we are obliged to furnish for dinner-tables and the long evenings—and real downright earnest! Sarcastic! Witty! How will you deal with witnesses? Better give up the profession.”

“But I was right, you see,” he replied,

sadly. "After all, I took the true view. What are you saying or doing now?" he added, reproachfully.

"Very well," she added; "it is not much matter now. The whole is not worth discussing."

"But it *is*," said he. "I am absurdly sensitive. I feel everything. I am not fitted for this profession, as you say so justly. Of that I must take my chance. I have brought all this on myself, and must get through some way. Still, I should not like to go and leave you with such a cold impression of me. I fancy you suppose that I have 'Blackstone's Commentaries' for a heart."

"And you, that I have a bundle of old fans and ball-room cards made up to look like a heart. Well, come, I withdraw everything. I am sorry that you are leaving us. You will let us see you in Town, sometime or other. Supposing a great case of—Love-land against some one—comes on, of course we must have *you*. But you will never

think of us. Country-house acquaintances are proverbially short-lived."

He turned back. "No," he said, eagerly, "I shall not forget this time soon, I may tell you now. And when I am shut up in my lonely rooms, it will do for me instead of fire, light, and amusement. I shall look back to it often and often. There, Miss Loveland, I am again in your power. But I do not care."

"Once for all," she said, excitedly, "give up this way of talking. We have too few friends in the world to be trifling with such fictions."

"Fictions!" he said, eagerly. "O, Miss Loveland, if I thought that you were in earnest, I should go away happy indeed. If I thought that you did not *quite* hate me——"

"But why do you go?" said she, suddenly.

"Why should I stay?" he answered. "If I thought there was any object—any one that cared or wished me to stay—but all

seem anxious to turn me out—unanimous in fact?”

This he seemed to put like a question. And he waited for an answer.

She smiled. “Well,” she said, “I for one wish you to stay. None of your fine romantic ladies would tell you that.”

“Ah, you are only saying this. When I see you again I know you will not be—as you are now. Everything will have ended happily, I suppose. They will have married you,” he said, bitterly.

“Never,” she said.

“Ah! you don’t know,” he said. “You have no idea what they can do with you. Women do not know how to resist; and my brother—whom they call a great and a grand match——”

She turned on him at once. “Who is thinking of your brother?” she said. “Upon my word, you are a plain and matter of fact person, and so *delicate* too. As I said before, you will make a splendid lawyer—so skilful.”

"Forgive me," he said, in dreadful confusion. "I never say the right thing. I had better go ; it is the best thing for me. I suppose I shall learn in time."

"Well," she said, "it is no such crime after all. As for your wild supposition, it is ludicrous—simply ludicrous. So, if that is any comfort to you—or will be useful—as fire or lamp-light in your lonely chamber——"

His face now indeed lit up with joy and pleasure, and it seemed, indeed, that he would take her words away, and use them in more than a metaphorical sense.

He went away that night. That evening the two gentlemen of the house and their noble guest became full of spirits and jocularity. "Poor Lord Chancellor," said his lordship, "I am quite sorry for him. But it is all for his good. In a few years, when I shall be dropping into Our House, and he shall be sitting on what they *call* the wool-sack, though I believe it is very much like the other seats they give us, I dare say he

will hardly look in my direction. Quite the way of the world. Perhaps he will ask me to dinner, eh? Well, I shall forgive him all the same—and *go* and dine with him—ha, ha!”

The son was almost boisterous, and very demonstrative towards Miss Loveland. But she had frozen back into a social icicle. She was not so much scornful, contemptuous, insolent, as the very perfection of indifference. She did not chill this rude savage, because she would not take the trouble to do so; but sat careless, indifferent, abstracted, at the same time with a cold look of warning, that forbade any licence. Lord Loveland looked uneasily again at her.

When they went up for the night, young Bruce stayed behind by himself, half sulky, half pleased, with his hands in his pockets, and his back to the fire. He was talking to himself, half grumbling, as it were. Suddenly there came a rustle at the door, and

Miss Loveland, with her lamp in her hand, came rustling in hastily, as it were to swoop down on some book or other object that had been forgotten. Young Bruce, his hands still in his pockets, rushed forward full of a gauche gallantry.

"What is it?" he said. "Let *me* look for it. Is it on the floor? I shall be glad to look for it on my knees—eh, Miss Loveland?" And he did go down significantly on his knees. "I shall stay until you tell me to get up," he said, half on his all fours.

She looked down at him as if he were really some wretched crawling four-footed thing. And with his limited sense he could read this contempt in her face.

"Why do you go on in this way?" he said, growling. "What's the use? You *know* you oughtn't. Your governor and mine, you know, have settled that we should be friends. I say, you know—you understand—eh?"

She shook her head.

"No," she said, gently.

He thought himself very clever, and even insinuating, and began to raise himself up into the likeness of a two-footed beast.

"Ah, come now," he said; "we know each other by this time. I tell you the truth, I *was* afraid of t'other chap. But we sent him off. We ought to be friends now, and great friends, and so we shall be. Why shouldn't we please our respective governors? Honour your governor and your mother, you know—eh? Come now?"

Miss Loveland laid down her lamp on the table, and spoke to him, so coldly and contemptuously, that her words seemed to beat into his face like a tremendous shower of sleet.

"I would die first," she said; "whatever you mean, I would die first. Can you take a hint like other gentlemen, or must I speak plainer? I came here with regret (you drive me to be rude); and I long to go.

While I am here, then, leave me in peace, and do not persecute me with your odious attentions. Whatever my father or yours may mean, I do not mean, never shall mean ; and, as I told you before, would sooner die first. There, is *that* plain enough ?”

Rage was in his eyes, and bitter mischief was on his lips ; yet he had a certain cunning.

“I don’t understand,” he said, “I am sure. Why would you die first, or rather than what ? Please tell me. Do you mean marrying me ?”

“Yes !” she said, with intensity ; “as you ask it—exactly.”

He burst into a loud laugh.

“And who mentioned it, pray ? ’Pon my soul, you honour me. A good joke.”

Quite calmly she answered, “You are welcome to that little advantage, with all my heart. I consider the understanding we shall have now cheaply purchased by it.”

He burst into a rage.

"I shall tell your father, and tell my father, and you shall see what they will say. It's a shame—an infamous shame—and I shall expose it. Never mind; we'll see."

She left him grumbling, and almost foaming there, with his back to the fire. Suddenly an idea struck him, and he went straight, with compressed lips, to his father's room.

The next morning, Mr. Bruce came down silent and gloomy, and scarcely spoke during breakfast. Lord Loveland, who was surprisingly mean in little things, used to get a penny paper posted to him on an economical condition—that is, by a mean friend, who was proud to be allowed to serve his lordship in that way. Indeed, there were people who, if the custom of society allowed of it, would have been glad to furnish him regularly with meats and groceries on the terms of his paying them with a very public intimacy. He was in spirits this morning, and unfolded his penny paper as if he were unfurling a

flag to the breeze. He read them out items with a gay commentary, especially in reference to "Our House." "Old Chalkstone going on again," he said; "Annual motion, of course—he worries our lives out."

But after breakfast, when his lordship had offered to take a couple of the house cigars (he had never to buy a cigar in his life), old Mr. Bruce gloomily asked him to step into his study—asked him, too, with his eye on Miss Loveland. Lord Loveland went gaily, coquettishly moistening his cigar, and looking at it with admiration before lighting it.

But at the end of that interview, during which he had not lighted the cigar, he came out with a very grave face. At the door he had just said, "My good friend, my dear friend, leave it—I know the sex—leave it to me."

But by Mr. Bruce's face, it was plain he did not care to leave it to any one. The next morning, Miss Loveland's great black trunk, with a strap round its waist, was in the hall. Lord Loveland had a few hur-

ried words with his friend before going away; pointed with winks and shrugs and jokes, instead of the usual punctuation.

"A little interval, my friend," he said; "I understand these cases, and then we shall come back to you. Depend upon me. Old Chalkstone will, of course, be asking me down, boring us to go to him. He is to have the Duc de Polnitz, one of the ex-royal family, and some of that sort. But I'll give him up. Depend upon me."

Miss Loveland went away coldly, as she had come, and cast the dust off her shoes.

"Thank God!" she said aloud, as she threw herself back into the carriage.

Three or four menials stood at the door, following the carriage with a stolid, stony gaze.

"'Ee calls himself a lord," said one of these gentlemen, while descending the stairs. "'Ee is not even a gentleman. 'Ee ought to be posted in town. A harfer-crown lord, indeed! I've a good mind to put it in brown paper and send it back to him."

"People shouldn't be lords as can't afford it," said his colleague, regarding *his* *douceur* as if it were some insect, or a jelly-fish; "I declare if I found as how I couldn't keep the thing gent-heely, if I wouldn't go to the 'ouse, and lay the 'ole thing down, blow me, if I wouldn't! Coming to 'ouses in this way, and goin' away without discharging the common liarbilities of society, why, it's next door to swindlin'!"

"'Ee a lord!" said the other gentleman. "I tell you 'ee's got a mean cobbler's soul in him, so he has!"

Amid a shower of their blessings the peer departed. Even the maid, who had been munificently "remembered" by Miss Loveland, suffered her sympathies for her order to override her sense of equity, and she tacitly suffered it to go forth that her services had been requited in the same unworthy manner. That was the end of the visit of Lord Loveland and his daughter to Brucetowers.

Book the Second.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

A PROPOSAL.

A YEAR and more passed away. Lord Loveland's fortunes did not improve; but whispers had begun to go about that he and his daughter "did not get on well together." But it was very long before the public could give credence to rumours that the gay, agreeable, good-natured peer was a sort of domestic savage—violent and brutal at home. The life of this daughter, an old lady publicly declared, was "a hell upon earth, my dear;" and she knew it, she said.

How? Through an "own maid" of her own, who had relations in service in that family. It was a crying shame. Awful scenes, my dear, awful! He was an old demon, and she had a spirit of her own. Yet was not passionate, but only passively immovable; never answering, but becoming a sort of block of human marble for the time being.

The world sometimes blunders on the truth. In this instance it was perfectly right. His lordship wished, naturally, to live at his ease for the rest of his life—and to live at his ease at the expense of those upon whom he had a natural claim. He was furious, therefore, when his daughter denied him this settlement. There *were* terrible scenes when the agreeable nobleman cast off that tranquil, affable, gay manner, that smooth, equable temper which no social contradiction could disturb, and assailed his child with a cold insolence, and a hard, cruel fury. He was often, indeed,

on the verge of a blow; and no one could tell what restrained him: certainly it was no remembrance of rhythmical denunciation about laying one's hand on women save in the way of kindness. And one night, a rumour reaching him that Mr. Bruce was meditating another alliance as distinguished as his, he nearly lost his wits with passion. He advanced on her, almost "hissing" out his rage. "Do you think *I* am to put up with this sort of thing? I won't, I tell you! Who is to make up to me for all I have lost? I might be down at that place now, and a hundred times more—all but for your stupid, mulish, squeamish pride. You're looking out for a pet man, are you? D—n you! What d'ye mean?" His lordship added, with a burst of ferocity, "How dare you—d—n it—I say, how dare you?" These were strengthening words utterly unknown to his lordship's out-door speech. Where did he find them now? or where did he find those flashing eyes and con-

torted crumpled cheeks? He was thinking of Mr. Bruce's clarets and champagnes, and the pleasant dinners, where the bumpkin squires came each with a censer and swung away through the whole evening. He had not been asked much of late.

"What d'ye mean?" he repeated, advancing on her. "Will you do what I want you, eh? Are you going to treat us to more of your infernal scruples—*are* you, I say? Have you a tongue? D—n it, won't you answer?"

"It is no use discussing this matter, father," she said, rising. "You knew my resolution long since. It is unchanged—unalterable." And she tried to pass him.

"Come, come," said his lordship, furiously, "this won't do. You don't leave here until we settle this one way or t'other, ma'am—one way or t'other." And he caught her by the wrist.

"Father, father!" she said, "you know me of old. This has no effect on me."

His lordship caught her by the wrist again suddenly, and pushed her violently back upon the sofa. "You don't leave this," he said, "until——"

Someway, he had not calculated on so violent an impetus—the malicious might say he had. But she caught against the corner of it, and fell back with her forehead against the wooden framework. She was stunned for a moment, and then, with an effort, stood up. "This is manly," she said, "and generous."

For the moment he was frightened; but, as she was so composed, his lordship grew bold upon his escape. Indeed, he seemed to himself to have had a victory.

"This tone won't do," he said, "my cold young lady. These tricks won't answer."

She left the room, and on the whole he was not sorry. "She will be more afraid of me now," thought his lordship, complacently. "She will see I am in earnest, and not to be trifled with." In fact, he ex-

pected that next morning there would be a change in her tone as regarded the marriage scheme. So he went out in good humour to a rather mean dinner—to people whom he did not know publicly, but who allowed him to order his own dinner, as it were.

These lived in the suburbs, and were stockbrokers. They had stockbrokers, or an analogous element, to meet him. He charmed them all. His talk flowed faster than the wines into his glass. "Do you know," he said, "if I had not been what I am now—which, of course, I like as a more idle life—I should like so to have been put into a Bank. I like, you know, the ledgers and the balancing over—that is the expression, I know—yes, I like the balancing over, and the totting, and the marking off the fly-leaves." These phrases he repeated with enjoyment, looking round on the company as if they were the regular technical terms of the profession; and, certainly, the gentlemen belonging to the profession

nodded their heads, as if his lordship were right.

He was treated with more obsequiousness even than usual. He gave a series of lectures on the rug to a Class of the stock-brokers; he made ministerial statements with great ability. Some people came in the evening, who were allowed a cheap view of his lordship from the galleries, as it were. One of them was a gay and forward young man, in habitual good spirits, and with very little outward reverence for the human or divine. He made his host hot by the free manner in which he encroached on his lordship's rug. He once even interrupted a ministerial statement.

"I think," he said, "I met Lord Loveland at Brucetowers one night. Yes, I am sure I did." His lordship coloured a little at the mention of the name, and at the idea of this being doubtful at having met him. "Because," the irreverent young man went on, "I heard a piece of news about

them to-day. Bruce, the son, is going to be married next Tuesday, so they say. I suppose it is one of the usual lies."

This news affected Lord Loveland sensibly. He came away in moodiness. When he came home, he did not find his daughter up as he expected, and this "put him" out. "Send her down," he said to the maid. (They lived in lodgings.)

The maid was about to say that Miss Loveland had gone out, when his lordship's eye fell suddenly on a note upon the table. The maid would have told him that she had taken a note from the young lady to the law chambers, and that a gentleman from the law chambers had come in about an hour, and with him she had gone away; but his lordship did not hear her, he was busy with the note, which he read with surprising calmness, considering the news it contained. It told him that for years her life had been wretched, miserable, a slavery. That she could endure it no longer.

That she loathed it. That she would kill herself if she stayed. That he had no affection for her, and did not consider her as a daughter. That she was sick of it, and would never, never return. That if he forced her back, which he might be able to do, she would poison herself—before Heaven she would !

Lord Loveland passed his hand over his forehead as he read this. Then went to a private press where he kept a little selfish bin of sodas and brandies, and let off a little bottle with an explosion. It was a disappointment ; but he had begun latterly to think that, after all, he would be able to get no profit out of his daughter's establishment as boarding-house for himself for life, and that, perhaps, free and unencumbered, his path through life would be smoother. Henceforth, on the rug, and at the dinners, he often said, in a low broken voice, that there were reasons—reasons you will understand—why he did not take interest in

these things. And other persons, in a voice quite as low and sympathetic, said to each other that his lordship had been much tried of late, you know.

Miss Loveland had indeed left her father. She had gone to an aunt at Calais or Boulogne, it was said ; a sort of shipwrecked spinster, cast away into singleness. It was a sad "desertion." "Poor Loveland" was sadly to be pitied, but was very much more asked out to dinners, and stood a good deal more upon rugs. Only he made his ministerial statements in a mournful key, which the audience understood.

In about another year, when news reached him of the death of Mr. Bruce, senior, he broke out into a fit of fury. Here was the youth now installed as lord and owner. He was himself defrauded of pleasant furloughs and long vacations down at that charming seat. The youth, too, was, after all, still unmarried, and "spent his money like a man," to use the language of the gentlemen

of the stable, to whose company he was known to be partial.

Young Bruce, the second son, had indeed brought his letter to Meiklejohn, the serjeant, some years before. The serjeant had read it, blinking, had yawned and said, with fatigue, "Ah — very good indeed! Loveland, to be sure. Glad to see you at any time. Busy now."

The young man very soon saw, after his second visit, that Mr. Meiklejohn was always busy, and that if the Speakership of the House of Lords depended on *his* professional aid, he had but a poor chance. He went, therefore, on his own resources. Went through the usual forms of a pleader's office, was called to the bar, and began really "to get on." Not, indeed, in the miraculous way told in the legal fairy tales: when, after long long delay, the sudden chance comes opening suddenly, with the briefless junior, ready at the right spot and right moment, to jump into the opening; the brilliant speech;

the public applause ; the crush of solicitors ; the shower of briefs. But, instead of utter famine, he had a crust now and then—a couple of briefs in the month—in short, was “getting on.” And Miss Loveland he saw very often—oftener than her father dreamed of. What she had said so playfully about her being a sort of cheap candle-lamp and firelight for his lonely chambers, had indeed come about, and her image often came between his eyes and the cold pages of the “Term Reports.”

His father, worth so many hundred thousand pounds, had left him five thousand. But it was likely that in ten or fifteen years this would be more than what his brother would have ; for the latter, with the aid of the stable gentlemen, was busy “spending it like a man,”—racing it, lending it, giving it, gaming it, and, above all, drinking it—“like a man,” it was said, in these cases also. After Miss Loveland had left her father, the younger brother very often

travelled and passed by Calais, where he saw her.

Lord Loveland, now very lonely, had quite taken up a new pursuit. "Why, my lord, not marry?" it was said to him. "You are not fair to yourself!" At which he would shake his head sadly. He had done with those toys long since. Even to dinners he went out to get rid of the sense of desolation; "to avoid," he said once, "the sight of his shattered household idols!"

But he began now to think of the question that had been put to him. "Why not marry?" Why not, indeed. It was like keeping money in a stocking, or burying it in the ground. A title alone brings its value, like an estate. So, one morning, he came down with the resolution of going out in the world to look for a companion—that is, for a wealthy companion.

He was not long in finding one. A rich stout lady, with carriages and horses,

and a house ready furnished (settled on herself), and plate and everything complete. It turned out most happily and smoothly. Every one said to each other, "I am so glad. It was the right thing for him. I always told him so. After the shameful way he was abandoned by his family, and all! I am very glad of it." Now the faithful hosts who had entertained him might reasonably expect a return.

Some *real* friends of the family now thought *this* a good opening for a reconciliation with the daughter. But his lordship became stern and cold when the matter was broached. "I have put the thing away from me altogether," he said; "by time I have trained myself to think of it with calmness; but I will ask you, as a *favour*, not to mention the subject again."

A year or two after this marriage, young Bruce was "getting on" still—that is, his hair was growing a little thin, his face a little worn and sickly, and his appearance

dusty. He was considered by the solicitors a steady, useful young man. Not one of your brilliant flashing creatures from the legal fairy tales, but still practically clever.

Suddenly, one morning, Lord Loveland was sitting at a late breakfast, reading his newspapers—among a good many breakfast luxuries—just thinking of going to his room with his *Times*, and choosing a cigar—he kept cigars of *his own* now—when the pale and dusty young Bruce was announced. He was inclined not to see him at first, but from curiosity, perhaps, he changed his mind. “Show him in—show him in,” he said, languidly. “Glad to see you. Sit down. I hear you are doing very well—very fairly. Well, come, give me some credit. Any young fellow I take by the hand generally *does* do; but no matter. Don’t thank *me*.”

The young lawyer’s mind was full of a more important matter. He took no notice of this patronage. “I have come,” he said,

"to speak to you on a very different matter. Your daughter——"

"Now, now, please," said his lordship, with remonstrance, "don't enter on *that*. It is not agreeable. The whole range of subjects is open to you, but not that."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Bruce, "but, however painful the subject, I must deal with it. I have come to you about your daughter. I would ask your consent to——"

Lord Loveland stood up in a genuine passion. "How *dare* you, sir!" he said. "What do you—whom do you—take me for?"

"I mean no offence," said the barrister. "I have long been attached to Miss Loveland, and——"

"Don't, don't attempt," said his lordship; "this is getting beyond all decency. I won't have it. I won't listen to you. I have done with her—for ever, sir."

"Forgive me," said the other, "that was

the very reason. I thought, as Miss Loveland was now separated from you, and living by herself——”

“And how dare you, sir!” said Lord Loveland, again. “Go away—don’t speak to me on the matter. Your family have behaved infamously to me, sir—infamously. I took them by the hand when they wanted it sadly—and sadly wanted it, sir. I don’t want to think of them. I—I—don’t want *you* here, sir, or—or—your subjects. Go—go away, sir.”

In this way was the proposal of the barrister received and declined.

He did go—without a word. He was now a quiet, calm, rather gentle man, whom the rough usage of life, and the grinding of chambers, was wearing down into yet more passiveness. But he had a certain resolution of his own. In a few months he had married Miss Loveland, at Calais; had taken a small—a very small—house in a London suburb, and had now began to work se-

riously at his profession. She was the Honourable Mrs. Bruce. Together, they made up "Mr. and the Honourable Mrs. Bruce," and there were many in the suburb who would have been proud to have "had them," to show them to friends, and sprinkle them through their rooms like rose-water. But they were not of the Lord Loveland type. "That nobleman," the world said, "had been shamefully treated by his family." He often said himself it was a great sacrifice. "You, Sir George, will understand—one's child in the same town—almost the same street—within a stone's throw. At this moment I may be looking in the very direction. But I owe it to myself, Sir George, however painful the sacrifice. I have a duty to the community in not lending the sanction of my name and rank to filial—er—insubordination. Naturally, Sir George, people in the rank of our bakers, and our tailors, and our grocers, who *have* daughters, would be very glad to quote *me*. No, no, Sir George."

And so Lord Loveland and Lady Loveland and suite went to the Continent, and came to Homburg in the season, and sat at the top of the table at the Table d'Hôte.

It was noticed that, rich as he was, his lordship did not go to the first hotel, where there were other milords, and milord the marquis, but to one of the second order, where he reigned without rivals. Stout fathers with families, who were no more than travelling couriers for their daughters and sons, competed with each other for the pleasure of getting near him; and here—just as at home upon the rug—he brought in his bill, and made his statements.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE BARRISTER'S HOUSEHOLD.

THE modest house in—say Merlin-terrace—to which Mr. Bruce the barrister used to come home, jaded, every day to dinner—was, as might be expected, the very temple of domestic felicity. The old attachment—the obstacles—the battles fought and won—the union of loving hearts—these should have been the elements for supreme joy and happiness. Merlin-terrace was the harbour with difficulty “made” after the storm. But after the regulated period—the season for raptures—had passed by, some little ruffles began to be seen on the waters.

Six months after their marriage, the lawyer was seized with a severe illness, fever and

what not, which lasted a long time. Change of air was ordered, strengthening, but expensive sea-air. This change came in the middle of Term-time, and when he grew well, he found himself weak, and not able to do very much work, which in one sense was fortunate; for some favourite and hitherto constant solicitor, after calling several times, and finding first that he was no better, and then that he had left, looked out for other genius of more physical strength, and better to be depended upon.

The cold Mrs. Bruce, however, played the devoted wife till his recovery, and he was deeply affected by her devotion. But she was very grand still, and would not give herself much trouble to make herself understood. And the grand idea on her mind which she carried with herself through the house all day, was as of A GREAT SACRIFICE having been done. Very often she had to bear a little mortification, when some fine lady passed her coldly as one who had "lost caste" by a low marriage. For her coldness

and dignity, and that habitual scorn she was so full of, all required rich scenery and decorations to set them off. In a mean house, and without an audience, the play cannot be mounted properly. Meantime, Mr. Bruce, in whose mind there was a practical turn, began to dream only of his profession, and of winning back the ground he had lost. Until one day it flashed upon Mrs. Bruce that she was not understood, and that **THE GREAT SACRIFICE** she had made—rank, station, fortune, everything—had not been appreciated as it deserved. Thus she wrapped herself in reserve, as in her seal-skin mantle.

In the midst of which, in the second year of their marriage, when the faithless attorneys were dropping back one by one (but coyly and reluctantly), appeared the little girl, the “pet,” who was christened by her parents “**ALICE**”—one who soon came to be known as “**FAIRY ALICE**,” and by no other name.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

THE SACRIFICE.

FIVE or six years had gone by. With them had gone by Mr. Bruce's delicacy and the coyness of the solicitors. Their favours now came with regularity, like the bread and the milk in the morning. He was fast approaching that pleasant stage of professional eminence when he had not time to sit out dinner, or to sleep, or to walk, or to live ; certainly not to enjoy himself in any way. Mrs. Bruce, colder than before, become conscious of the great mistake now irrevocable, and of THE SACRIFICE she had made, but which no one gave her credit for, went through life a sort of half statue. Mr. Bruce was grieved at first, tried very often to ex-

plain, or to get an explanation ; but had not time to hear or comprehend the delicate entanglement of the misunderstanding. And his mind was soon seen to be wandering away to "Clark and Fennelly," waiting open in the next room, and whose niceties he could follow far better than the story of Mrs. Bruce's wrongs. This only left matters worse. And finally, he gave it up with a sigh and with a sort of contentment, for his heart, in truth, was bound up in another mistress. Only as little Fairy Alice was now growing up into shape and figure, into a sort of delightful little toy and human Dresden figure, that could be taken off the chimney-piece, or out of the cabinet, and set down on the table or floor, he began to find a greater reluctance in rising from dinner and going back to Messrs. Clark and Fennelly. She was the prettiest and the wisest little creature in the world, without the unnatural wisdom of precocity, but an utter unselfishness for others. She was Steele's "beauteous Virgin" in miniature, so "carelessly

did she charm, so ignorantly excel." And she was the most picturesque and charming of little girls, with a variety in her gestures and her little arts of enticing, that made her an inexhaustible source of delight and amusement.

It was not wonderful, then, that the father should soon begin to turn from the legal fossil and cold lumps of stone he was busy with in his "study," to this living, lively, and bewitching thing. He was always having her on his knee, which was her throne. He was never known to have a fire in his study, and when it was proposed to him, said he did not care—indeed, had there been one there, he would not have known of it, or perceived it. Perhaps, too, there might have been some motive of economy in it. But suddenly, in these days, he saw that the sweetest sugar-plum he could give his Fairy Alice, and what she looked forward to as her greatest holiday, was to be allowed to sit on a stool in a corner of "the study," turning over a book of pic-

tures, or of maps even, while he was busy with Messrs. Bullen and Leake, and Mr. Davidson's valuable and useful "Precedents."

"But, my darling," he said, "you can't stay here. The other day, you know, I quite forgot you had been sitting there for hours, and your little face and fingers were quite blue with cold."

"But I like it—I should so like it, papa, if you would only let me—for a *little* time."

The answer was the usual lifting up of Fairy Alice on to her regular throne. But the next morning Mr. Bruce ordered a fire in his room, complaining a good deal of the draughts and cold. This order excited some pleasure below, but a good deal more amazement. And the little girl had in future a corner with a seat—her *own* corner and her *own* seat—and spent delightful hours with a great book like a great table on her little knees, which she read with the devotion of a little saint. The man of law, with all his skill and acuteness, as applied to Messrs. Bullen and

Leake, and Davidson, whom he could riddle through and through at any moment, did not see through the artful "pleading" of the little "counsel" on his knee, who had taken this fancy in order that he *should* have a fire in his study.

Now that she was present, it might be expected that some warmth and real flesh and blood might be introduced into the house. But over Mrs. Bruce the film of ice was growing thicker every day. Secretly she deeply resented this preference on the part of the child. But she was too proud to say a single word. She had even trained herself now perfectly to an even indifference and utter absence of emotion, and saw what she considered "outrages" with a calmness that surprised herself. But under the ice flames were burning. Some friend of Mr. Bruce had one day, speaking to him of Mrs. Bruce, used the unfortunate phrase "constitutionally cold;" and this always came before him when he thought of her, and seemed to him a happy explana-

tion of all doubts and difficulties. For often he had scruples, and grieved over this unhappy state of things, and prayed fervently that they might all live happily and in a union cemented by their common love to the little girl. But then would rise up (written in large letters on one of the great pages of Davidson) the words "constitutionally cold," and that explained and settled everything.

She was more a little lady than a child; more, I believe, a little ornament or toy than one of the noisy band of young irregulars, disturbers of public peace, who climb steep sofas, and cry like the "Great Waters" of Versailles. Once a grave gentleman, who called, said something about "a regular bit of Chelsea," a compliment but doubtingly received; since, through such little sprinkling of geography as she had reached to, it seemed to convey that she was no more than a fragment of that unimportant settlement. But yet she saw that it was intended as a handsome speech. After

all, it was very appropriate—a little coquettish bit of Chelsea—with deep blue eyes, and flowing flaxen curls tied up sometimes with a blue ribbon—very wise and discreet—full, at the same time, of diminutive airs and graces—a little unconscious actress, always before the footlights as unconsciously—in short, Fairy Alice, as the whole household had it.

In that suburban house, where Fairy Alice was a sort of little queen, and reigned regularly, lived the advocate, her father; who, to the neighbours, was a man of about six-and-thirty, in what is called respectable business, making a few hundreds a year, and yet with every hour of his time filled up. Not a handsome face, they thought, but a thinking face—a face that seemed to hint it loved quiet, and concentration on books, and a smooth road of life to travel along; a man that chafed and writhed at anything like domestic battle, and on whose nerves a wordy conflict jarred violently. The neighbours knew that this man of briefs and cases was married to a pale, cold, English

lady, tall, handsome, stately, but whose whole soul was bound across and in all directions with the steel bands of an exquisite propriety. She brought no money with her, but, instead, an enormous dowry of perfect propriety.

Thus Mr. Bruce the advocate, and Mrs. Bruce the stately, were, as it were, the pillars of the mansion; but between them stood this little Fairy Alice, who was the centre of all. Both seemed to love her, but after different fashions. Mr. Bruce the advocate, openly, demonstratively, delighted always to welcome her into his sacred studio, where her temporary presence among the hard briefs and papers seemed to light up their rough realities with a golden glory. She delighted herself to enter—which she did, as it were, like a figure stepping down cut out of a picture—with some message or request, which she delivered wisely and discreetly, and then tripped out lightly in a flash. For these

visits she always did a little bit of coquetry, setting a new bow in her hair, or a bit of ribbon across her shoulder in the quality of a sash.

Perhaps Mrs. Bruce loved her quite as much, and with as strong an infatuation; but that coldness of hers, and sense of the decencies, would always rise up between her and any display of affection. She was always, in fact, torturing herself by cruel sacrifices to the proprieties. When Mr. Bruce snatched a few moments from his treadmill below, for a cup of tea and the fireside, and was taking Fairy Alice on his knee, and twisting her golden hair into a new style of head-dress, not as yet sanctioned by fashionable head-dressers, Mrs. Bruce, who would be looking on restlessly, and with the cold expression spreading gradually over her face, like a film of ice upon a pond, would at last interfere—"Please don't, Chester; don't you see you are rumpling all her dress?"

"We will take care of that," would answer Mr. Bruce, smoothing it down carefully.

"Besides," continued Mrs. Bruce, the film gradually thickening, "you are giving the child such bad habits; do, please, set her down."

A shade would come upon the forehead of the advocate; deepening presently. "What harm is Fairy doing?" he would say; "there is no one by; surely, for a few moments, it can't make much matter."

"The child's mind will never be formed if she is indulged in these tricks. Please set her down—do, now."

All this while Fairy Alice's face had been growing thoughtful and distressed. She was so wise and so discreet, that she knew perfectly what was coming, and was actually gently sliding down off the paternal knee.

"Come here, Alice," said her mother, austere and firmly; "get yourself a chair,

and learn to sit as you would in society, when people are by."

Mr. Bruce would set her down abruptly, push back his chair, and, with a heavy sigh, stride rapidly out of the room. Poor Fairy Alice would look very sad, and timorously fetch her own special chair, and sit there in silence with her parent—now a perfect block of Wenham ice, but inwardly wrung by what she deemed this cruel disrespect to her in presence of their child. Wise Fairy Alice, quite conscious of this feeling in her mother, made an effort at indifferent and easy conversation, just, indeed, as experienced elders would have done in a similarly delicate situation. She drew in her chair near to her pale, silent mamma, yet not so near as to outrage any of the proprieties, and began to prattle about the country, and its joys and delights, to which, indeed, her mamma's heart always turned. Nor was this any irregular disjointed child's talk, but sober, and thoughtful, and pointed.

But Mrs. Bruce repelled her, not harshly, but coldly, hinted that an unrestrained curiosity was about one of the most dangerous faults in young people, and that "asking questions" was a criminal offence against the laws of society. Fairy Alice accepted the reproof, drew away her chair to the distance prescribed by the laws of society, and worked sadly at her sampler for the rest of the night.

How often these little misconceptions took place over the figure of Fairy Alice, whose little heart bled on every recurrence, it would be idle to mention. Wise Fairy Alice took note of all that was hidden underneath, and of those polite battles concealed, it was thought, from her, under this aspect of cold speeches and indirect allusion. Many a time did Mr. Bruce rise up from his fireside, and, pushing back his chair, walk from the room with that sigh of impatience. Little Fairy grew very sad over all this, and sometimes dimmed her bright eyes with some tears.

Besides this wonderful love which she had inspired, she had a greater claim to that indulgence which is supposed to spoil children, from her being naturally delicate. She was fragile and airy; and some four years ago had been all but snatched from death. A famous physician—Brogden—had a terrible tussle with the grim King of Terrors, over her slight little frame, fought him desperately, inch by inch, and finally conquered and drove him out. Little Fairy Alice, over whom, for three weeks, there had been two white ghastly faces bent, and despair, and terror, and agony, recovered; but it was felt that a second such contest and a second such victory was not to be thought of, and would end fatally. Brogden himself was generous enough to his enemy to own this. She was henceforth to be watched jealously, and that little fairy chest of hers to be fenced about with all manner of precautions.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

FAIRY ALICE'S BIRTHDAY.

AT the end of the first year, however, it was said that she was getting strong; and in a year or two more, the eminent physician, taking soundings and gauges with his instrument, pronounced that everything was going on well, and that in a year or so she would be as "stout" as could be desired, and have a chest that might be the envy of all the world for its strength and endurance. Meanwhile, colds and draughts were to be avoided; "and," said Brogden, the eminent physician, "don't let our little lady work too hard."

Her birthday came round about Easter—a great festival in the house—the two

parents made her presents—and there was usually some little gala organised for the day. Happily, too, at this season, Mr. Bruce had a sort of vacation at his courts, and putting on a little extra pressure in advance, contrived to devote *one* day to a sort of affectionate idleness. And it had come to one special year, when Fairy Alice was nine years old, and the prettiest little queen of her age that had been seen in the city.

They were to start early on the festival morning, take railway train to some pretty country district where there were abbey ruins—breakfast at a rustic inn, wander about, dine on the grass, and have a very happy day generally. There was a friend whom Mr. Bruce thought of a little wistfully that morning, who had been of these parties before, and whose cheerfulness and hearty spirits had been the most delightful leaven. On the last anniversary he had been with them; but, since then, circumstances had occurred which would render

his presence unadvisable. Fairy Alice was looking in that direction wistfully also ; but though not in full possession of the facts, yet with a wonderful instinct, she never alluded to it or questioned her parents about him.

This was an old friend of Mr. Bruce's—a shrewd, long-headed, genial, true, honest, and blunt man of business ; a burly figure, a broad chest, a square head, a thoughtful eye, and shaggy eyebrow sheltering it. A brave, clear, healthy creature in mind and body, with a bell voice, and a quick sharp manner. Captain Bell, too, was his name —“Commander Bell” was upon his card. He had served, not much within the range of shot and shell, but more in a pacific yet not less laborious direction : in guard-ships and on packet stations, and along the coast. He was now waiting for something more in the same category.

A fast friend he had always been to Mr. Bruce, through thick and thin, as it is

called, rough and smooth, broad and narrow, weal and woe. He had often saved and extricated him in certain little difficulties; had counselled him always, and had, unluckily, specially advised him against that marriage with Mrs. Bruce. This interference had one day unluckily travelled to that lady's ears—how, it does not much matter now. It became the unpardonable sin—naturally an offence never to be forgiven. And before long, by some ingenious device, kept for such purposes in the conjugal armoury, and in the management of which wives are tolerably skilful, there sprang up a coldness on her side, and an almost positive hostility.

But, on this festive occasion, Mrs. Bruce had laid herself out, even laboriously, to be gracious. There were several things which she could not relish altogether, but she put a violent restraint on herself. There was no moral ice allowed to form. They went—they breakfasted at the rustic inn—they

saw the abbey ruins—they dined upon the grass, and were as happy as they had laid out to be. Fairy Alice was in great delight. Never did she so much belong to a Reynolds' picture as on this day. The sun that made the abbey ruins so picturesque, flashed down across her flaxen locks with a splendid gorgeousness. A little hat was perched on one side of her head, and one of the Irish scarlet cloaks with a hood, and of a diminutive pattern, was on her shoulders. She did not skip and gambol about in the grass, in which fashion children of her age testify their enjoyment, but was quietly joyous and very talkative, making light and wise remarks all through the day. Her laugh often echoed through the abbey ruins. Mr. Bruce the advocate was dragging no lengthening legal chain, and for a time had got clear of the fatal legal bondage. It was, indeed, a very happy time for all. Mr. Bruce the advocate was actually in spirits, and even became jocular.

Coming home in the train, Fairy Alice chattered for them noisily. She stood up between them, and looked out of the window on the country flying past. They were the only passengers in that compartment, so they could speak without restraint.

“Darling!” said Mr. Bruce, looking at her a moment with admiration. “Come, you shall stand up on the cushion, and you will see better. You can describe everything to us, like the man at the panorama.”

Fairy Alice jumped up at once.

“Take care, Chester,” said Mrs. Bruce; “she will fall out.”

“Fall out?” said he, laughing; “Fairy is too wise for that; or, if she does, I must go after her, for I have her here fast by her dress.”

“O, how pretty,” said Fairy, with great delight. “And I can see so well now. On the right, ladies and gentlemen—that is, papa and mamma—you will observe——”

“There,” said Mrs. Bruce, “you have

seen quite enough, Alice, so come down, please."

"O, mamma, you will let me stay. I am quite safe here."

"I tell you, Clara, nothing can happen to her. I have fast hold of her."

"But what is the *use* of it?" said Mrs. Bruce, her film of ice now beginning to spread. "It is so unmeaning. Why encourage the child in these sort of games? No well-brought-up girl ever climbs up on cushions."

Little Fairy, of a sudden grown serious, glides at once to the floor. Colour came into Mr. Bruce's cheeks.

"What!" he was going to say, "even on this day she cannot spare me, or spare this little creature;" but with a strong effort he checked himself, broke into the vulgarity of a faint whistling (an excess he was never guilty of for his private pastime), and said nothing. Again little Fairy Alice, with that curious delicacy so much beyond her years, began tremulously her usual little

prattle, and so for this once the difficulty was tided over.

After a few minutes Mr. Bruce had worked his mind clear of the matter; but Mrs. Bruce's nature was one of those which are specially sensitive, and make no difference in their sensitiveness whether the soreness be caused by themselves or others. She was cold and aggrieved. Just as their journey was coming to an end a brilliant idea occurred to him, which would make a suitable finish to this immortal day. The Sable Harmonists were at this time fulfilling an engagement at a theatre near them, and after convulsing (said the bills) Crowned Heads indiscriminately over Europe, were now giving their "elegant drawing-room" entertainment, to what the same official document called "Nightly Thousands!" In fact, it was this very image—gorgeous, certain in its vast comprehension, but a little loose in English—that attracted Mr. Bruce's eye from the railway carriage window. "Suppose," said he, "we finish all with the Ethiopians, and

make part of the 'Nightly Thousands?' I declare we shall," he added, growing enthusiastic at his own conception; "it will throw little Fairy into convulsions of laughter. She will fall in love with Bones, and adore the banjo fellow who sings the pathetic ballads. I have never seen a play for years, and am entitled to a treat."

This vision of ecstatic bliss was too much for little Fairy, discreet little Fairy as she was. She almost uttered a cry. The beatific vision of the sable grotesques took her by surprise. "O, papa, papa!" she said with a gasp, "how—delightful! You are too good! How we shall enjoy it."

"Well then, it is agreed," said he; "we shall have just time to drive home, and put on all our festive garments."

Fairy Alice was thinking of a sweet little wreath which would lie quite smoothly on her golden locks. But Mrs. Bruce had not yet said a word. For the moment he had forgotten her.

"What do *you* say to the Ethiopians?" he said, with a sort of gaiety.

"Personally, I am not interested," she answered—the ice forming rapidly—"since you do ask me the question."

"O, nonsense!" said he, with an affectation of heartiness, "you *must* come! We could not go without you, eh, Fairy?"

"O, mamma must come, of course," said the little girl, eagerly. "It would spoil everything if she did not."

Mrs. Bruce's lip moved a little. "I thought you were consulting me as to the propriety of going at all, not as to whether *I* would go myself. If you *do* ask me, I should say we have had enjoyment enough for the day."

"But once a year," said Mr. Bruce, calmly—"for little Fairy's birthday comes only so often—such a little dissipation is not too much; the most rigid moralist must admit that."

"You can do as you please," said she.

"If you ask my advice, I should think it scarcely proper to corrupt the child's mind with these sort of shows. No well-brought-up child is taken to them."

Mr. Bruce coloured up. "We will not discuss the point here," he added, in a low voice, "before her. Wait until we reach home;" and he muttered something to himself, yet which she heard, and which took the shape of "outrageous."

They walked home in silence, little Fairy the heaviest hearted of the three. As they entered the hall, she put up her lips to her father's face. "Papa," she said, "stoop down," and he stooped down. The cold lady had swept on in front. "Don't—don't ask me to see Bones to-night, nor," she added, with something like a twitch of pain, for it *was* a trial—"*nor* the banjo man. We will give them up, and wait until next year. Listen, papa," she added; "stoop down again. I am sure I should *not* like the banjo, nor—nor the bones."

“My little darling,” said he, “don’t be cast down ; we shall see about it yet. Poor little plant,” he said to himself, “she will be dried up—frozen—withered—if this goes on.” Run up into the drawing-room and tell them to get tea.”

“Clara!” he called out, in a trembling voice—Mrs. Bruce had ascended just one flight—“would you come down here for a moment?”

Mrs. Bruce descended again, stately, cold, impassive, yet with more colour in *her* cheek. She entered his legal study, and the door was closed.

What took place within was not known to any of the household. She had never seen him so excited before.

“How long is this to go on,” he said. “*I* can bear it as long as you please. You are welcome to treat *me* to your coldness now, and as long as we are together. But *I can’t* have our child made miserable. *I* can’t have her little warm life frozen up,

and she herself withering up, under this unnatural treatment. For God's sake keep it all for me, but spare her." (Alas! for the old days when Lord Loveland was at Bruce-towers, and calling *him* Lord Chancellor. They were centuries away now!)

A sense of cruelty, harshness, and of the bitterest and most monstrous injustice, came rushing into Mrs. Bruce's face. It was too much. It was injustice. If anything, the balance of affection was on her side. She really loved, idolised that child, and would have shown it, if her pride would have let her.

When she could speak, she said calmly, "Perhaps I interfere with her well-being—perhaps she would do better without me altogether?"

"It would seem so," he said, excitedly, "if you are to treat her in this way. But I tell you what, Clara, it must *not* go on. I shall not see my darling—who should be *your* darling too—frozen out of life by such treatment. I won't have it. Behave

as you like to me — if that be any indemnity.”

Again Mrs. Bruce paused. She was striving to keep up her coldness. “I told you of a letter I got from my aunt at Calais a fortnight ago——”

“No,” he said, “you don’t tell me much, and I don’t want to know your secrets, or your letters ; all I care for is our child.”

Another time she would have said, “So it seems. So I have always thought.” But she went on calmly, “If you let me finish what I would wish to say, I can relieve you and your child of my freezing presence—your child, whom you say I do not love. No matter about *that*. My aunt is advanced in life, and ill. Perhaps I have a duty to *her*. She was kind to me once, and does not think *me* so cold. I shall go to her—for a time only, of course.”

“No, I did not mean that,” he said, hastily. “I only want you to——”

“But *I* mean it,” she said. “I am alone

in this house. Let us say no more about it. It is only a visit—that of a niece to her aunt.”

“Forgive me, Clara,” he said. “I said more than I meant. I only want you to be a little gentler with our Alice.”

“Ah,” she said, with a burst, “you will one day regret the cruel injustice you do me !”

But for Fairy Alice, who knew and could interpret circumstances with a wonderful intelligence, it was a terrible period—a time almost of agony. Her little heart fluttered distressfully; she was consumed with a strange agitation, for she knew well the unpleasant conflict there was going forward in the sacred study. A quarter of an hour—half an hour—it was now all over with the notion of the Sable Harmonists. Already were those diverting artists convulsing “Nightly Thousands;” but she never thought of those exquisite delineations with regret; nay, even they presented images repugnant and almost disagreeable.

Three-quarters of an hour and the study door opened—some one passed out with a haughty defiant rustle. The storm was over. Mrs. Bruce came in to the drawing-room with hot cheeks, and little Fairy Alice crept up to her timorously. The stately lady put her by without a word, went to the fire, stood over it, and studied the coals with an intense earnestness, then walked away, still stately. Thus the sun of the happy anniversary set disastrously this happiest day of the year. For long after, this dreadful day was looked back to with an uneasy horror and shrinking, and if its image presented itself at nightfall, was dismissed with something like a shudder.

For it bore fruit. Within a day or two after, it was known that Mrs. Bruce was to make a journey to see her friends. To stay for a short or long time, indistinctly—to go speedily, and with as little delay as possible. No one of the friends or acquaintances guessed what was behind this journey, or what a pre-

tence it covered. It was only held as confirmation certain of the fact, that Mrs. Bruce was heart and soul an alien, and longing to be with her own friends. It was, however, thought curious that she was to go alone, and that Fairy Alice was to stay with Mr. Bruce. More curious still was it, that a female relative of Mr. Bruce's was to come into residence immediately, and take charge of the establishment until Mrs. Bruce returned.

Mr. Bruce pursued his law, shut up, as it were, in strict confinement in the sacred study. But, outside, sad and solemn preparation went on for the departure. There was much packing to be done. To Fairy Alice, some poor pretence was kept up of this being merely a temporary absence; but she knew the whole as fully and completely as though a regular explanation had been entered into for her benefit; she had wonderful sagacity, and guessed it all. That day week—the day

week of the happiest day in her year—was Mrs. Bruce to set forth upon her journey.

Never was there such a chilling, hopeless week. It dragged itself by like the last fatal days before an execution. In the midst of which came troubling news of Mr. Bruce's elder brother, who had now taken to living almost wholly at country inns, in familiarity with ostlers, potboys, and barmaids, and who was said to be much under the control of a disreputable attorney. The disreputable attorney had a daughter, to whom it was said he was anxious to marry his protégé. Naturally this constant living at inns, and with such company, increased his taste for fiery drinks, and he had two escapes from the fiery clutch of delirium tremens. He was now at this time in the grip of the third seizure, and the disreputable attorney — whom vulgar rumour asserted held a heavy policy of assurance on his life — had written to say that he was

very bad; so bad, indeed, that his brother was thinking of setting off at once. Mrs. Bruce went about her preparations sternly, coldly, and austere. Not a sign betrayed any emotion. Mr. Bruce the advocate was scarcely to be seen; he kept himself fast imprisoned below, and took counsel with his briefs. But there was an intense weight of grief abroad in the house, and it really did appear to have fallen upon the little lady of the mansion, who, by this estrangement, seemed to have become bereaved of both father and mother, and to stand alone. Her little figure was surely unequal to such a premature burden.

It was really piteous to see her moving about with a worn, troubled air, as if care and responsibility were already on her little weak shoulders. They should have thought of the little chest. She went about restlessly all day long, very silent, and not the least troublesome; when her mother was by, affecting to be laboriously at work on

her sampler, yet never asking an indiscreet or awkward question, so persuaded was she of the delicacy of the situation. When she was alone, she put away the eternal sampler, and with a weary look laying the little cheek to rest on that hand which was so little also—(an attitude of reflection copied from her father)—she began to think painfully and anxiously. What plans could she be laying out in that wonderful little brain?

The stately lady remained stern and sad to the last, only her cheek grew thinner. Fairy Alice regarded her wistfully. Was she yearning to speak her mind—to pour out whatever wisdom she had concocted during those hours of reflection. But there was something so resolved and even desperate in the purpose of the stately lady, that her little heart sank when she thought of it. Even with her gentler father, to whom she often strayed in, and who had taken her sadly on his knee, she felt this subject was not to be entered upon. For

when he had kissed her, and kissed her again, and her golden tresses were shed all about his shoulder, and she had whispered softly, "Darling papa, we must not let mamma go away, must we?" she felt his arm relax, and his knee move away, and found herself put down gently on the ground.

"Poor child," he said, sadly, "do *I* want to send her away? But you can understand nothing of these things. Run upstairs and stay with your mamma; she is alone now." Universal wretchedness—moral gloom—was over all things in that house.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

AN ANGEL MESSENGER.

IT came at last to three final days—even to the final day. There was still a gulf between Mr. Bruce the advocate and Mrs. Bruce. Both were coldly inflexible; there was on both sides the same height, depth, breadth, and thickness of pride; and the two quantities had met and would not give way. Some days before—indeed during one of their meals—he had thrown out some gentle words, scarcely amounting to a positive advance, but still smoothing the road for an advance. These were frozen back upon him promptly.

Both, indeed, secretly turned towards that distant arbitrator, bluff, honest, business-like Commander Bell. His plain sense would be invaluable at this crisis; but, with all

his bluffness, he was sensitive, and had met with too open contumely to have forgotten it. And so it had come to the actual vigil of Mrs. Bruce's departure for Calais; and these two proud spirits, still aloof and defiant, were not to give way. With the morning Mrs. Bruce would go forth coldly; and time and distance—it is pretty well known what efficient aids to a decent indifference *they* are!

Mrs. Bruce was above, making a feint of diligent packing; Mr. Bruce was below, making a more wretched feint still of briefs and cases. And Fairy Alice, after fluttering up and down uneasily, a prey to the most bitter uneasiness and anxieties, was now, with her little face actually haggard, sitting alone in the drawing-room on a low *prie-dieu* chair, which by prescription was considered her private property. It was late in the evening; lights had not been brought in, and Fairy Alice was alone there with the gloom. She had not cried like other children, but she was weary with grief, and her

little brain was sore and strained with thinking. Suddenly, with a child's sigh, she thought she would go up-stairs to her mamma's room, at which she had ineffectually knocked several times. On this visit she found it just open. She knocked softly; no one answered; she entered as softly.

A dim light was burning on a chair, and at first she thought there was no one in the room; but presently, beside the chair, she saw an open trunk, and beside the open trunk, on her knees, was her mother, bent down very low, looking at something in her hand, and weeping. She was indeed uttering low moanings rather than weeping. Much distressed, and at first almost aghast, the impulse of Fairy Alice was to rush forward; but the next moment a sort of timorousness checked her, for at all times careless intrusion into the sanctuary of the cold lady was checked, and at such a moment of unrestrained feeling it would be bitterly resented, and yet little Fairy Alice lingered, irresolute whether to stay or turn back. Just

at this moment the cold lady turned towards the light, looking very earnestly at that picture in her hand, and Fairy Alice then saw the light glint on its rich gold frame, and instantly recognised its magnificence. It was a small coloured photograph of her father.

She stole down stairs again very softly, and went back to her little chair—rather, she turned over to the sofa — and with her face on the cushion, the golden curls tumbling about it and covering it up like a veil, she wept there long very bitterly. Never was child so distressed. Poor hapless Fairy Alice! She had a world of care upon her that night.

An idea flashed upon her suddenly—a vast and stupendous idea, almost overwhelming for that little brain. It lit up her face. She started from the sofa, and put back her yellow curls. She was trembling with the majesty of the conception. She then crept away softly up-stairs to her own room, fetched down the Irish red cloak and hat, came down again as softly, and stood pant-

ing and fluttering in the hall, not knowing whether to go farther or no. All was quiet, and it was about eight o'clock. Mr. Bruce was still making believe to be busy with his briefs.

She opened the hall door, and, after a moment's pause, shot away down the street. She knew the way perfectly, and yet she had almost lost her road. People coming home from work stopped to look after the pretty spirit in the scarlet cloak that flitted past them. Some made as though they would stop her. She was dreadfully frightened, but still held on. At last she came to a retired square and modest house, where Commander Bell, R.N., lived. Out of breath—filled with confusion—overwhelmed with the tremendous step she had taken—so it seemed to her—she rang the bell, and asked if she might see Captain Bell, please, for a moment. The servant stared at this little visitor, but without a word brought her in at once to the parlour, where Commander Bell, R.N., was sitting at the fire, smoking.

Commander Bell, R.N., laid down his

cigar in astonishment. He knew and recollected her, but could not comprehend it.

She told her little artless story. In her wise way explained her hopes, and fears, and terrors, and finally begged of him to come back with her. "O, sir," she said, "you can help us. You are so good—so brave—so sensible." Commander Bell was delighted. He could have taken her on his knee, but a sense of too much respect prevented him. He merely got his great rough pilot coat and hat, and taking her hand in his, set out.

It was a delicate task; but rough, honest Commander Bell was not to be kept back from a good work by such a consideration. They reached the house and entered. Commander Bell tapped at Mr. Bruce's door, and entering, shut it behind him. Little Fairy Alice fluttered up to the drawing-room, where her mamma was sitting desolate.

They sat together for half an hour and longer in the gloom, until at last steps were heard on the stairs—heavy steps. Little

Fairy Alice, who had been watching feverishly, started up, and ran to the door. And then there came upon the landing two figures—Mr. Bruce and his friend. Fairy Alice ran half way to meet them, and then stopping short, turned back to her mother. “O, mamma,” said she, coming in, in a sort of flutter, “here is some one at the door; and do see him, and *do* let us all be happy together again. O! dear mamma.”

It was dark, so no one could have seen her mother's face; neither did she say anything, but Fairy Alice felt her hand trembling on her shoulder. Then Mr. Bruce walked in, straightly and steadily—leaving Commander Bell at the door—and said:

“Clara, don't—O! *don't* go away! Stay with us—with me—and with this darling.”

When she was presently crying hysterically on Mr. Bruce's shoulder, there was below them a little sobbing face, looking up, and two tiny arms, spread out (but they were so small they could not spread very far), drew together the estranged hus-

band and wife ; further, seemed, with such little strength as they had, to hold them together in that long embrace. Looking down, they presently saw this little infant angel of peace between them, and Mr. Bruce caught her up in his arms.

On that night it did indeed seem likely that the old misconceptions were never to return again ; that the film of ice, should it ever form, was to melt away as soon as it was formed. The vision of Fairy Alice was to be a beam of warm sunshine. If she were again to stand up and look out of windows, it would be likely that she could do so without check. And as for "Bones" and his fascination—even for the greater glories of pantomime—these things as yet might be almost forced upon her—heaped, as it were, into her little lap, like sugar-plums. No doubt she would be as a silver chain to wind round and round them again ; and then almost infatuation for this darling, growing every day, would hold them together, even if everything else were wanted.

As they sat there that night in renewed union so supremely happy, and none so happy as the little Fairy at their knees, it occurred suddenly to Mr. Bruce that perhaps some of the fault might lie on his side, and that familiars called "Clarke and Fennelly," "White and Tudor," and "Davidson," might have something to do with the business.

"I seem to have sold my soul to them," he thought; "perhaps I am not gentle enough with her. After all—money and profession, what are they to *these*?" Little Alice seemed almost to preach on this text, when she said eagerly, "You won't, papa, go back to those dreadful books to-night?"

"No, darling, no," he said; "and on other nights," he added, looking at Mrs. Bruce, "not nearly so much."

She felt this was for her, and some colour came into her cold cheek. "Or supposing," she said, "that we were to go and see those—those people you spoke of the other day?"

“O, the Sable Harmonists!” cried Fairy, in a burst, which she checked in a second. For she felt that the skilful artists who could convulse the “Nightly Thousands,” were for *this* family associated with painful recollections. “O, no, mamma! I should not care for them in the least.”

“But you should, Alice, and you must, and we all shall; or, stay,” he said, “what do you say to THE THEATRE!” This was a grand abstraction that had never even entered into Fairy Alice’s little being—removed from her as were the stars, or the Court and Queen of England.

“That is to say,” he said, “if mamma is not tired, or thinks it right for you to go. Dearest Clara,” he said, “what do you say?”

But at this moment the maid entered with an envelope. It was a telegram from the disreputable attorney. He was now not far off from “realising” his policy. Mr. Bruce was lying at a low inn in the country, where he had been seized by his old enemy.

He knew nobody, and was raving wildly. The country doctor said he would not last until morning. By that night's train Mr. Bruce his brother had hurried to him, was not remarked, or perhaps even seen, by those fiery eyes, and by eleven o'clock the next morning was receiving with disgust and repugnance, from the disreputable attorney, a congratulation on his being master of Brucetowers. The joy in that sudden prosperity made the whole family forget many things. No one thought what a rude, rough, villanous night that had been on which Fairy Alice had made her expedition. A cruel east wind had been abroad, which had stabbed her even through the folds of the little red Irish cloak. But a child's cough is very trifling, and she herself—little Fairy Alice—was in such a pretty flurry about their now having a country place, and gardens, and money, that she had not time to think of a child's cough.

Book the Third.

“JOCK.”

THERE was mourning and the semblance of grief; a hatchment and a marble monument ordered. In a very short time Mr. Bruce and his wife and daughter were down at Brucetowers. “Clarke and Fennelly,” with “Davidson,” and their unclean familiars, were finally cast out. Mr. Bruce’s wig and gown were never to be put on again. Prosperity, and a stream of money, brought a wonderful change. They were now on the smooth downs of life. Such promenading brings with it a more

gracious allowance, a calmer and gentler spirit, and Mrs. Bruce's coldness, with the old idea of her sacrifice—for the sacrifice was now in some degree compensated for—had been softened away. There was, of course, the decency of sorrow kept up. But for little Fairy Alice were now the most charming walks and gardens, the softest grass and flowers, the smell of new-mown hay, green-houses, silvery looking ponds, and a hundred open-air delights which she had never dreamed of. It was a bath of fresh open air, and she, as it were, bathed,—dancing and singing along the walks in excellent spirits. Her mamma, from the low window, looked out at her across beds where there were the scarlet and blue rings of choice flowers, and where the gardeners were always busy, bent down: and she thought how fortunate everything had turned out. For that now this fine air and exercise would take away Alice's little cough, and make her “a strong child.”

For the fact was this, from that night when Alice had set off on her expedition, she had had a sort of cough, which went away, only half driven out, and came back in deceitful quiet ways, at intervals. It was a sharp night, with an east wind flying and lashing about like a whip, and from which the little red Irish cloak could not protect her. But the Town doctor, Dr. Brogden, grew quite gay and cheerful when he heard they were going to the country.

“Quite right,” he said; “that will set our little girl on her legs again; just what I was going to order; be out in the open air, little one. Run about as much as ever you can. A little tendency to delicacy of the chest, that will mend when she is older.”

Sometimes, as she gambolled along the walk, round the men, perhaps, who were pulling the roller, this “nasty cough” caught her like a rough boy, and made her stop. And it shook her little figure, as such a rough fellow would do. The little chest

shook and quivered, as if the unfeeling cough was to shatter it. From the drawing-room she took care that this should not be seen. And in the house, knowing what uneasiness and pain it would give her parents, she skipped away on some of her wild little errands, down the long corridor, whenever she felt that it was coming on. Still it did not mend.

There were friends and neighbours about, whom Mr. Bruce soon knew very well indeed. He was falling into the ways of a country gentleman, and some of the neighbours began to talk of "putting him in" for the County, or at least for the Borough. Not two miles away was the bachelor squire, Mr. Broughton, as hearty as a genial morning—as glowing as a sunset, with his honest head set in his shirt collar, as in a bowl. With a voice like a trumpet, and doting on children, he loved Fairy Alice like his own child. She liked him, and came dancing to meet him, with her red cloak,

not yet worn out, flying out in the breeze. He was to teach her to ride, and was already looking out for a pony. Privately, "he didn't like" that cough, and there was a local doctor, Rogers, to whom he brought her one day, on a walk as it were, to ask about a tenant. Very fortunately she gave a cough before him, so the country doctor could judge. He was a quiet and a young man, but when he heard that music he looked grave. Presently the friendly Squire Broughton had her up on a chair, and there she was the prettiest little coloured statue that could be conceived: in a straw hat with curly hair, and the short red cloak.

"How heavy is she, Rogers?" said Mr. Broughton, gaily; "come, now, to the ounce."

Little Alice clapped her hands with delight at this prospect.

"O, I must—I *must* be weighed," she said.

The doctor lifted her gravely and set her

down; lifted her again; he made her take off her cloak.

"It wouldn't be fair to put the weight of the cloak in," said Squire Broughton, gravely. "Don't you see, Fairy?"

Fairy Alice's face grew serious as she thought she had been detected in an unfair attempt.

"No, no," she said; "of course not. I did not mean——"

Squire Broughton lingered behind with the doctor to speak about the village patient.

"She is very thin—too thin for her age," said the doctor, "and as light as a feather. She wouldn't bear much, poor little soul."

"God bless me!" said Squire Broughton, in sad distress. "O, you don't tell me *that*."

"If I were her parents, I should look very carefully after her."

The squire walked home with her very mournfully, which the delicate little soul set

to the account of her sick tenant, and tried to keep silent and sad also.

"How do you feel, Fairy?" he would say, little restlessly. "All right—eh?"

"O, so happy, Uncle Broughton." She always made him "Uncle Broughton," by a sort of affectionate fiction.

"But I mean *here*, darling," he said, laying his hand on his own broad chest; "nothing hurts you—eh? Tell uncle, won't you?"

Fairy Alice laughed and looked wise.

"I don't know *what* pain is," she said; "only do you know, Uncle Broughton," she added, a little confidentially, "I feel sometimes a little tightness here."

"My darling, it is nothing," said Mr. Broughton. "We all have that now and again. They make your dress too tight across your little chest. But you shouldn't go out in the draughts too much. Now to-day, how do you feel—eh?"

"O, so well, uncle," said she; "like as if I were grown up."

“I will speak to her father seriously when I get home,” thought Uncle Broughton.

Before they got home, Fairy Alice had been a little silent, and as they got to the avenue gate, said, nervously :

“You won’t ask me about how I am, and that sort of thing, before papa, will you, uncle?”

“And why not?” said he, in amazement.

“Why,” said she, taking up the corner of her scarlet cloak, as if to consult it, “papa has so many things to think of, and he is so anxious. Now, you will promise me? My birthday is coming on, you know.”

“Ah, yes, so it is,” said he; and thought of a pony he had been looking at that day, and which should be secured in time.

Among other friends who came to the house was a dreamy young gentleman—a Mr. Singleman—an amiable, good-natured youth in spectacles, who said, in an abstracted way, that he was merely a “Bird

of Passage," and would soon be "going on" to another place.

Fairy Alice often wondered was this a figurative way of speaking for that final place of repose to which she had heard allusions in the pulpit. But Mr. Singleman merely spoke of his missionary work. The fact was, he soon tired of a place; requiring variety in the faces of his parishioners, especially the female faces. But he was very good natured to Fairy Alice; sometimes bringing his violincello and playing her mournful airs, with his ear held close to the head of the instrument, as if afraid of losing a tone. In this fashion he would play himself into utter abstraction, his head gradually being lifted and turned towards the cornice of the ceiling, and his shining spectacles travelling round the room. Then he would give a great sigh, and lay by his "cello" in a corner like a spoiled child, and pass out.

There was a good-natured young barrister

who had been intimate with Mr. Bruce, and had once a room in common. This was Drinkwater. Long after, the expression, "with him Drinkwater," became familiar to newspaper readers. He told Mr. Bruce the latest news and anecdotes of what was now, to him, his old profession. There were now, in short, always people in the house, and Mr. Bruce having declared that Fairy's birthday should be kept like a common festival, got down a lot of guests to do honour to the occasion.

Among other delights, a child's ball—where Fairy Alice was to be a tiny hostess, and receive her young ladies and gentlemen at the door, with all the dignity of her mamma—had been long planned. All the young people within a circuit of ten or even fifteen miles were coming in a crowd, with little fans, and little bouquets, and there was to be "little" music, and—and a little supper, and little dances—in short, a regular ball, seen, as it were, through the wrong end

of a telescope. Of this entertainment Fairy Alice had been dreaming for weeks; and everybody knew that she would fill the office of miniature hostess to perfection. Not alone in Brucetowers, but in many houses for miles round was the little festival looked forward to eagerly.

The night before, a little pony of matchless beauty, that was more like a great shaggy dog than a legitimate pony, and for which Mr. Broughton had cheerfully paid, his five-and-thirty pounds, came home. Fairy Alice was enchanted—bewitched. She was patting him and treating him like a dog; though the pony, who had been called “Jock,” looked down on her little head. She almost wanted to make him “give the paw,” like a “regular” dog. But the delight this toy imparted was beyond belief. The whole house came out on the steps to admire—not “Jock,” who, in other circumstances, would have justly attracted praise, but—his mistress. Mr. Singleman, who, to show that he

sympathised, in a dreamy way had laid his hand on Jock's tail, was scared into waking life by a light lunge of the pony's, and a shower of gravel. In his sudden start backwards his spectacles fell upon the steps and were shattered to pieces.

The pony was to be tried that very evening, and the red cloak was fetched down, and the straw hat. The voice of Mrs. Bruce was heard, a little in her old cold key. "Take care, take care, dear!" For the evening was closing in, and seemed about to be damp. But this "protest" was overborne in the loud chorus of sympathy for the little red-cloaked queen and her new toy. For she was looking wistfully at "Jock," and yet more wistfully back at her mamma, who, touched by this appeal, said, "Go, darling, but don't be long."

Uncle Broughton said he would be running footman. Fairy Alice was placed on the Newfoundland pony, who shook his mane, and set off.

The guests stood on the steps and watched. They went round the lawn and down the avenue, and round the lawn again, Uncle Broughton keeping up at full speed until he was fairly "blown." Fairy Alice was in heaven—a glow of heat came into her cheeks—her hair tumbled down about her shoulders, and she was panting with the excitement and exercise.

"We shall have Jock out three times in the day," she said, "if it won't tire him, or won't be cruel?"

"Bless you," said the running footman, "six times won't be too much. He's made of metal, cast in a piece at the iron-works at Birmingham—I got him down in a case, darling."

This joke delighted Fairy Alice, and Jock was made to canter again to show whether he had this metallic stuff in him. She was in a perfect glow, and this healthy exercise made her look as brilliant as her Irish cloak.

"Ah!" said uncle, "but this is what will

make you strong, and a perfect woman of you. Bless you, you are growing up already!"

But the evening was changing. Some heavy drops of rain began to fall in splashes. A shower came on in a moment. Uncle Broughton was frightened.

"What *shall* we do?" he said; "we are nearly a mile from the house."

Fairy Alice only enjoyed it.

"We shall all get wet together," she said; "Jock and all."

"Ah!" said Mr. Broughton, "there's that plantation—just the thing. We can wait there until the shower is over. Now make Jock go!"

Jock did go, and they were under shelter in a few seconds. But the shower took more than a few seconds to go over—nearly half an hour, during which little Alice sat her pony patiently. She did not notice that the thick trees of the plantation round her were like an old wall, full of chinks,

through which the draughts came sharply. She felt "Jock" under her give a sort of comic sneeze as he found the change of temperature, and laughed.

At last the rain abated. She had got very silent. Uncle Broughton, looking out desperately, was saying, "I think it would have been better to have gone at once," when they heard a noise on the gravel, and saw the carriage coasting slowly down the avenue, like a boat come to take them off, with the servants standing up and looking out from side to side, like sailors.

Mr. Broughton shouted, and Fairy Alice, in great delight, was put inside and driven home, with Jock cantering behind, his bridle held by the servant in the back seat. She would put her head out a good many times to see this show.

They came home in a sort of comic procession, and drove up to the door, where Mr. Bruce was standing anxiously. He

lifted her out with soft speaking. "No, not wet, thank Heaven!"

"Not at all, papa," she said; "such fun as we have had."

"No," said Mr. Broughton, "we got under the trees just in time, but only just in time. But *I* should say a warm drink," added he privately; "she might have got a little chill, you know—it changed very suddenly."

"It was the wet I was afraid about," said Mr. Bruce, much relieved. "Brogden cautioned us so particularly. But a good hot drink will do no harm."

And, accordingly, the "good hot drink" was compounded, and Fairy Alice, kissing everybody all round, and special favourites twice, was led away a little earlier than usual. Her last orders were that Jock was to be ready saddled at the door by eight o'clock. To-morrow was to be such a happy day, and she was to begin early.

But, alas! when her maid came to call her, she found Fairy Alice with bright wakeful eyes and hot cheeks; and when she asked her, "Was she well, miss?" Fairy Alice could scarcely answer her. She was nearly choking with hoarseness. But when she could make herself speak, she said, "Don't keep Jock waiting; and, Mary, don't tell papa."

But papa was soon nervously in the room, looking frightened at the two little patches of vivid colour which stood out upon the background of the snowy linen. She was quite well, she assured her dear papa, and would be quite well—only a cold. In fact, she wanted to get up. And behind Mr. Bruce was now the cold face of Mrs. Bruce, but become all worn and anxious in a minute.

The local doctor was presently at hand. Rogers, who saw the little flushed spots, heard the adventure, and to the public said it would be only a cold; but to Mr. Bruce

and to Mr. Broughton he spoke more fully. "We must be very cautious about this. It is on her chest, and she is very slight, and not a strong child."

"Not a strong child!" No, indeed! And the same words seemed to be struck from the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, as from dismal bells. "Not a strong child!" They knew that.

And this was the little festival! The presents were all in the house—for every one had brought her a present—and were to be given at breakfast, and make an accumulated pile of birthday glory that was to take the light out of her little eyes. The series of presents that began with unlucky Jock.

But still the eyes of Fairy Alice looked forward fondly to the ball.

"Of course we must write and put them off, dear," said Mr. Bruce; "but only put them off. A week will not make so much difference; and then you will be quite strong again, and able to dance all the

night, and *receive your guests*. Think of that, Fairy! You know these great ladies in town, they have to stand up all night at the door, and get dreadfully tired."

A blankness came into her face, but with it there was the sweetest resignation. Her father saw this mixture of emotions, and his heart was wrung. "You could not do it, darling," he said. "You know I would have one every night of the week, if it pleased you."

"I know, indeed, papa," said Fairy Alice, putting up her face, as usual. "I was thinking of the poor children, papa; and they will be so disappointed. Could they not come all the same? I need not come down."

"The ball without *you*!" said he. "No, no. It is not to be thought of. It is for *you* we are giving it, not for *them*."

Later, however, he came back. He had taken away with him that look of distress. He talked the thing over with Mr. Brough-

ton. "God bless me!" said that gentleman, "you make too much of it. This is the way to make the child ill. It is a mere cold. Take my advice, and let the thing go on. It will put her in spirits."

And Mr. Bruce, taking his advice, hurried back to the little girl, and saw delight, and hope, and joy, all rush to her face, like a succession of flashes.

It was settled that she should stay in her room, which was on the same floor, and that every one should come to her periodically, like a series of expresses, and tell her news of the festival.

It was a dismal and unhappy day. The master of the house went about with a load of care—a condemned prisoner in private life. A weight was on the house. The day dragged on. Some calamity seemed to have fallen, or was about to fall, on the mansion. Thick clouds were abroad. But towards four o'clock the sun broke through, and Uncle Broughton came down, cheerful and

joyous, with news that the hoarseness was gone, the red spots toned down, and that the little Fairy was so well that they were talking of letting her get up. "The little rogue!" he said, in high good humour; "I think she was 'foxing' all the time. 'Pon my word, I think she was."

She did get up. She begged so hard, and almost so piteously, that it was impossible to resist her, and she was brought down to "mamma's boudoir," where there was a charming sofa near the fire, on which she could lie and enjoy herself on this her birthday—this day, which had not turned out the day it was hoped it would. As she lay there, a little queen, she held a sort of levee, and every one delighted to come in from the billiard-room, or from the library, sit down beside the sofa, and talk cheerfully to the little lady. At the door would appear very often the father, with a restless worried look, and at the sight of him

she would call up light into *her* face, and affected cheerfulness and enjoyment.

He held councils in the hall and on the stairs with a wobegone face.

"The child is perfectly well," they would tell him ; "it is only a cold."

"If she is not well to-morrow, I will telegraph for Brogden," he answered. "That I have made up my mind to."

Yet for her this happy day had turned out very dull and dispiriting. Although the flush had passed away from her cheeks, she felt her little chest being bound and bound across with steel bands. But this she kept to herself. They brought her in books of pictures ; but this she said fatigued her ; besides, she had seen them all. Uncle Broughton, who was always coming in, made her laugh by telling her how he had lost his way and fallen into a ditch one night going home ; but as she laughed, her little chest came against the steel bands with a

sharp pang, which Uncle Broughton did not see. Seeing she liked this comic side of misfortune, he told her of another adventure : how he had once got into a yard, where a wicked dog watched him for nearly an hour, with his eye on his trousers, and his jaws ready to open, until assistance came, and how by this detention he lost the train.

“ By the way,” said Uncle Broughton, “ you haven’t a dog. You would like a dog, I am sure.”

She almost jumped up with delight at the notion, and clapped her hands.

“ How nice !” she said. “ How charming ! O, indeed I should, Uncle Broughton. You are *so* good to me.” And she sighed, half from the sense of his kindness, perhaps, half from the pressure of the steel bands on her little frame.

“ We shall find out a big one, a great Newfoundland,” he went on, heartily, “ a

match for 'Jock;' and you can drive them both in a pony carriage."

This ecstatic prospect quite overpowered her, and she closed her soft blue eyes in rapture.

"But those great dogs," she said, wisely and reflectively, "they will not eat me up, or bite, Uncle Broughton?"

He laughed. "Nonsense, little woman. I know them well. I have had one myself. O, I wish I could give him to you. Poor Cæsar. His life, I declare, was as interesting as any of ours."

"O, Uncle Broughton! Uncle Broughton!" she said, rising up in her eagerness. "Do tell me about Cæsar and his life. When did he live?"

"Ah, there's the dressing-bell now, my darling. But I'll come back when they are at their wine, and tell you all about Cæsar."

When they were at their wine—and these

were guests from the neighbourhood, invited to do honour to the day—Uncle Broughton “slipped” away quietly to the little room, and pulling an arm-chair close to the sofa, “settled himself,” as she called it, “cozily,” and then began a little story for her.

THE RENOWNED DOG CÆSAR.

It was at Wearmouth, on the coast, where there were docks and vessels of war, and mariners, and a general sea flavour, that we—my younger brother Jack and I—were reared: at the apron, as it were, of an aunt of awful severity, and almost ferocious bearing towards the youth of either sex. She meant well; for to adults needing the many charities of life, she was gentle and gracious. But towards infancy her system amounted to a frightful terrorism. The town and its docks are now fallen out of fashion; the mariners, and the ships of the mariners, have long since drifted away;

that stern woman—who ruled so awfully in the little two-story baby-house at the entrance of the sea-town, a baby-house with a garden and wooden green rails in front, a brass coffin-shaped knocker, and a green paddock—hunting-grounds so exquisitely coveted, and so jealously guarded—that stern woman has drifted away too, in quite another direction. But there remains for me, in all its primitive gorgeousness, undimmed, untarnished, in the old glory, the old nimbus or aureole, the image of the Theatre Royal, Wearmouth, the first theatre I ever saw, that glorified temple of the drama rising in a sort of divine light and rosy cloud, all spiritual as it were, and redeemed from any taint of earthy grossness.

Taken in a strict practical sense, such as it would appear to persons of a prose nature, and setting its image before me at this date, it must be owned that it was a mean, wretched tenement. It was very old,

very shaky and tattered towards the roof, sadly ruined, and, for a considerable margin running round its base, very soiled and slimy, like the green sediment on the sheathing of one of the old ships in the port. An ancient shed ran all around; and over each door were faded inscriptions—a little awry, too — “BOXES” — “PIT” — “GALLERY.” Gorgeous cabalistics they seemed; and though the approach to the sacred stage was up a lane, which I believe now must have been dark, boggy, and unsavoury, I used to look up the lane with an awe and exquisite interest, and an utter insensibility to the peculiar fragrance of the place. It was this divine beat which kept away a too near familiarity with the persons of those who took part in the inner unspeakable mysteries. Once, indeed, I saw a figure pass me, and turn up the sacred lane, and whose retreating form I pursued with a gaze almost stupified. An interior instinct told me at once who it was; and

though his face was of a curious dusky yellow, and his coat was buttoned tightly, and his hat had acquired a sort of burnish or glaze near the brim, from too anxious brushing—still, through all their tokens broke out the divinity of the man. I pursued him with a sort of fascination until he reached the door, and was absorbed into those halls of Eblis—behind the scenes. It thrilled me. He would live for us among blue clouds, and golden spangles, and crimson light (for the season was then “on,” and the luscious description on the bills drove us wild), and rise up clarified, as it were, with an ambrosial light in his face, and clothed in dazzling celestial attire. It was maddening; for our ascetical aunt, following the tenets of the late Mr. Wesley, never let us near these demoralising seats of entertainment.

Shall I ever forget that morning when we—my younger brother Jack and myself—prowling about the town on our way to

school, were attracted by a dead wall—a wall so dead, in fact, that decomposition had long set in—which displayed to our enraptured eyes a bright fresh glaring primrose-coloured bill—glistening like a snake's coat with the fresh varnish of new paste. We were always greedy connoisseurs of such proclamations. It was the most delightful and entertaining literature we knew. What dignity, what gorgeousness, what splendour in the titles! associations of which no rude awakening shocks could ever have divested us. But here, at the dead wall, with chins turned upward at an angle painfully inconvenient—for the officer of the theatre had placed his bill at a higher level than his wont (it was a Saturday morning, too, I recollect)—we read the delightful news, and were confounded with joy. The “Renowned DELAVAL Family” were engaged for three nights only, which even in itself was welcome intelligence; but what was of far more importance, an arrangement

had also been effected with their FAMOUS DOG CÆSAR! This was the special tidings that made our hearts beat. He—THE DOG—was actually engaged to perform in an exciting, a *real* piece, the name of which we had never heard, and yet which was very dear and familiar, and strangely vital and suggestive—"THE DOG OF MONTARGIS, or THE FOREST OF BONDY!" What a breadth, a pregnancy of colour, as it were! Could the English language go further? A dreamy mystery hung over the yellow bill, and seemed to exhale from that glorified paste. Something French, no doubt, something secret, something in the depths of a forest, exquisitely delightful. Nor was this all. There was a Cut—a Cut?—a vigorous picture—brought out in rich masses of black printing ink, with the Dog, noble creature, in the centre, and the moon, boldly portrayed, and trees, and a woman at the door of a house. Nor was this all. The characters were sustained by the Delaval

Family—the “inimitable” Delaval Family, as they were rightly styled—that is to say, by Mr. Delaval (of the Theatres Royal, London, Bath, and Bristol, indistinctly); Madame Delaval, also indistinctly, of the Theatres Royal, London, Bath, and Bristol; Mr. Paul Delaval, late of the Metropolitan Theatres (this seems, if cloudier, a grander generality, still cloudily); and “the Infant Marie Delaval,” a little cherub of the stage, as yet far too young to be associated with any establishment. Though yet unknown to us personally, we—my brother and I—felt a strange yearning to “the Infant Marie Delaval,” for even the bill, usually seasoned with the coldness of an official document, spoke of her delicately and tenderly. This gifted family, we observed, came forward later in their Grotesque Ballet Pantomime, entitled “The Scaramouche in Love,” which seemed to be an entertainment of much promise. But, somehow, our eyes seemed to wander back again to the glorious car-

toon, done in the rich lamp-black, of the friend of man, the "RENOWNED DOG CÆSAR," wandering in his mysterious forest. Lovely, indeed, was that bill against the dead wall; and we feasted on it until we knew its sonorous periods by heart; even until we arrived a full quarter of an hour late at school, and were put ignominiously with our faces to the wall. (Had it been the dead wall with the bill!) We little recked that public humiliation; we were far away, lifted above earth, in the society of the immortals—that is to say, of the Delaval Family, and the Dog Cæsar!

That Saturday was a half-holiday. In our way home we took the now etherealised temple of the drama. A horrid profanation had occurred in our absence. Some irreverent person had carelessly torn away a large segment of the bright yellow bill, dividing the renowned dog Cæsar diagonally across; barely the head and fore-paws of the injured animal were left. It was a

cruel outrage. We found another not very far away; but somehow it had not the old glory; it did not show the original glisten and stickiness, so to speak. The first had endeared itself as though it had a special individuality of its own—and yet this was clearly an erroneous impression. It was the change in the renowned Dog Cæsar that affected us. He seemed fainter—his impression that is; the black ink was not so vivid and abundant.

At home there was a strange surprise. There was our father waiting, come down from London to see us: nay, not only to see us, but to take us home for a week. He had been a mariner a few years before. Events of gravest import had occurred: the hand of a sister had been asked in marriage—the hand of the sister had been granted, and we were to be fetched to see the show. To-morrow we were to start; meanwhile, we would take papa out and

show him the sea, town, docks, mariners, and the rest of the attractions. Was the same thought in both our little hearts? Was the same idea ever fluttering upward to our lips? With our dear father we always cultivated a republican freedom of speech; but on this occasion it was the ineffable awe and grandeur of the subject that inspired us with timidity. It is certain that, with a mutual instinct, we artfully took him round by the strange and deeply meaning edifice which affected us so curiously. And, after all, there was indeed a sincerity in this motion, for we regarded it as by far the chief lion of the place. "What! eh!" said our dear father, gaily, "what's this? Store of some sort? O, I see—*used* to be a theatre. Have they ever plays here now?" Our eyes met—my brother's and mine, that is—and we murmured timorously, "O, papa, the Dog! the renowned Dog Cæsar!" We

had drawn him near to a glistening bill ; the glories met his eye ! He was always, indeed, the best of fathers.

We went that night—I cannot bear to think how wearily the hours dragged themselves by—and yet the bliss of that day ; it was too much happiness for mortal boy. I had a sort of gentle palpitation of the heart which was distressing at times ; it came from chafing at the constraint, and yet it was very sweet agony : but our aunt ! gracious, what injustice we had done that injured woman ! How we had secretly traduced her ! We blushed for it, and wondered at our blindness. She entered into all the spirit of the festival ; her ascetical spirit had vanished. The late Mr. Wesley never intruded. She was enthusiastic, generous, co-operative ; she lent her aid heartily to the adornment of our persons. She was busy the whole evening, decorating us with unprecedented splendour. What a fairy-like evening it was—a

golden cloud hangs over it now—we walked and pursued the customary avocations of life as in a Glory. The customary ceremonial of dinner was but indifferently executed, in strange contrast to the usual avidity that waited on that meal. We were too blissful for such earthly joys; there was a choking feel about the throat, and an interior disrelish, which rendered food unpleasant; it was got through in some fashion; papa occupying a time and using a deliberation that seemed unaccountable. Then to dress.

Delicious function! Such burnishing of the cheek, such moistening of the hair—never was personal adornment so delightful. There was a magic waistcoat of pale blue shot with silver, never worn before, and which had indeed been appointed for another solemnity, but through accident had been left buttonless. This my aunt—no longer ascetic, still unconscious of the late Mr. Wesley—strained every nerve to have

completed. There were white trousers—virgin articles and speckless; and there were short jackets, and black ribbons about our necks tied in elegant bows.

The dragging hours at length brought us to seven o'clock. At half-past the doors opened. Yet there was a feeling within us that no risk was to be run, and that a handsome margin of time was to be allowed to be clear of accidents. A fly, therefore, was sent for with all speed; with fluttering hearts we descended in our gorgeous apparel. It was a dampish interior, and had a perfume of ancient straw—yet how celestial seemed the vehicle. That aroma has been sweet in our nostrils ever since. A horrible thought—what if the household time had been astray, say by half an hour, or even by three-quarters? At another season the wildness of the theory would have been apparent on a moment's thought, for an irregularity of *that* nature under the rule of my aunt—that exactest of the tribe of

women—was almost ludicrously improbable. A moment's calm reflection would have shown us this; but we were too agitated to let reason have her sway.

Here it was at last—a dark projection, with unlimited flare of gas. Here was *our* door, with the epigraph “BOXES,” on which played, unsteadily, a lamp. A few people were standing about, one or two entering, and yet, on the whole, there was not the furore we counted on. What a fragrance again as we entered the passages, skirted by whitewashed walls, and sprinkled ever so delicately with sawdust,—a fragrance compounded of orange-peel, and a delicate aroma of gas, together with a damp vaultish savour, inexpressibly sweet. And then the check-taker; how courtly, how noble in his bearing (I believe him now to have been a very earthy creature, sadly corrupted with gin); and above all, the Unseen Hand that so mysteriously absorbed our moneys into that awful window! Another moment, and

we were in the theatre! Exquisite sensation! Something between awe and a thrill, and yet ravishing delight, curiously compounded, as the somewhat murky interior gradually opened on us. And yet, though *now* it was something approaching to darkness, yet then it was more a subdued light and delicious sense of mystery. It must have been a raw and cavernous place; somewhat, as I now suspect, broken out into moist patches and damp eruptions, with an universal unwholesomeness as to the plaster. The green curtain was mean, and a little ragged, and an unwholesome air seemed to float from the pit. But I saw none of these imperfections—it was all divine, sacred, and we gazed with ineffable reverence, and waited for THE DOG. Dimly does it now come back to us that there was not an overwhelming audience: which indifference to the claims of the drama affected us with secret wonder.

When our eyes had been satiated with

the natural beauties of the scene, they found a sort of relief in wandering to the orchestra, which was now filling in slowly. I am bound to say, that the divine cloud did not seem to enclose those celestial members of society; but stopped short with the stage. Still, though regarding them with a certain familiarity, and as more or less mortal, they seemed lifted above our humanity, and formed a link between us and that brighter sphere to which they led the way. Even their entrance—how mysterious—out of the bowels of the earth.

And yet, looking back now and taking them for all in all, I am afraid they were not what would be called an efficient orchestra. I fancy five or six was their full strength; but no secret enemy can say that on that night they did not do their best. But the whole responsibility appeared to lie upon one member, who seemed to take upon himself more duty than was perhaps necessary for the complete balance of the parts.

He sat apart, and long before the performance commenced, preludised softly to himself. His instrument was the cornet.

I am confident the music he discoursed was of a harsh, and what might be called an *ad libitum*, nature. None of the Band, I am confident, were shackled by the stupid conventionalities of notes or staves; and yet the effect seemed to be very beautiful. Too much—a responsibility almost unfair—seemed to be thrown upon the shoulders of the drum—I mean, upon the performer who made that instrument discourse. He never relaxed; but when there was even a hint of failing, came in splendidly to the rescue. Yet somehow the wielder of the cornet attracted me more powerfully. He seemed more conscientious; yet this might be fanciful. There was something odd about his appearance that drew us to him with wonder. He always presented to us who were above, a sort of second face, for he was abruptly and shinningly bald; and the effect to us was as

of a small private pool or pond, surrounded with banks of rich verdure. He had a hopeless expression, as though he were blowing himself steadily to his grave, and at the same time a stern purpose in his blast, as though he were blowing a scanty subsistence for a numerous offspring at home, which he was, most likely. A few scattered brambles grew upon his upper lip, in the nature of a moustache, and he affected us with sadness.

It was a gloomy piece naturally—alas! I speak of the cold maturer view—with that Forest of Bondy in the dead of night, and a good deal of losing of their way by belated parties, and much measured speech, recriminating, defiant, and in various other keys; and yet how absorbing, how even fascinating, the whole whole history. How we sympathised with the noble Aubrey (he was a captain in the French service at some indistinct period, when a large field of white facings was worn in front), who used literally

to chant his heroic sentiments, in a sort of measured strain. And was he not proprietor of the renowned Dog Cæsar? Mr. Lorimer, Aubrey—the name Captain Aubrey, how musical, how melodious! It embodied all that was chivalrous, grand, gallant. Even in the bearing of that other officer in the same regiment—a man in whose breast every spark of honest manly principle was dead, and who was consumed with an unworthy jealousy of the noble Aubrey—even in him (*he* had large white facings too) we had the interest which attaches to bold reckless villany. It was impossible not to admire secretly his dogged brutishness, when the noble Aubrey was forced into a duel with him, and actually won the first fire, and he—was his name Lesparre, or something in that key?—took his place with folded arms and without changing a muscle. We knew—as *he* knew well—that the noble Aubrey had his life at his command—and we gasped. A feeling, however, that was changed into

uncontrollable admiration when the noble Aubrey discharged his weapon in the air, remarking, at the same moment, that "thus it was that Aubrey avenged himself upon his friend." Which admiring feeling was in no wise diminished by the fact that for the rest of the evening the air was charged with the sulphurous results of the explosion.

From the way in which the Captain—shall we say Lesparre?—received this advance, we again gave him up. He must have been radically both a bad man and lost to every generous impulse, and we were not surprised, when the night drew on, and the noble Aubrey had to pass through the Forest of Bondy on urgent private affairs, to find this bold bad man plotting some unholy deed. We had no fair data to go upon, but we could see, from the scowl and general deportment of Lesparre, that something was rankling in his breast.

It now came to the Forest itself—the depths of the Forest—a *very* flat scene,

which came from the right and left and joined in the middle ; and at the same moment, to impart a sense of coming horrors, the lights went down to a degree that hindered all view of what was going forward. And yet there was an artfulness in this enforced obscurity, for otherwise would have been revealed—at least, I now feel an instinct of this description—a cottage and garden in the distance, with other objects wholly inconsistent with the depths of a forest. The mists of years rise up between me and that lonely and sequestered place ; yet still I faintly recal that we were present at the deed of blood. The fact is, all gave way before the overpowering interest of the scene that followed, still vividly imprinted, even to the minutest particulars : the scene of the Midnight Cottage, with a real green door, and a real garden gate, and a bell, and general obscurity. The Midnight Cottage now seems a curious description : but it was so called then, and seemed fine, vivid English.

What was it that made our hearts leap so? Not the skipping grasshopper music which was now being "made" in the orchestra, suggestive of spasmodic walking, and which had somehow a strangely oppressive effect—not the silent and deserted aspect of the Midnight Cottage (the proprietors of the green gate and bell being locked in profound slumber), not the breathless expectancy of the house, but the distant bark or "baying" (most exquisite music!) of THE DOG (induced by pressure on his tail) heard behind! At that sound a strange physical impulse of rising and sitting down again in our places took possession of us—a pleasing yet disquieting restlessness—with an idea that force would be requisite to keep us down in our places. Every eye was strained to the wing. And here, with a sort of joyous canter, his mouth open, and a great red tongue lolling good humouredly out, as the habit of Newfoundland dogs is, entered THE RENOWNED DOG CÆSAR.

At last ! Splendid creature, so noble, so grand, so massive. Black and white all over, shaggy, with his tail in a hairy and insolent cornucopia, and his hair, ears, and general person, swinging about him as he walked. We burst into a tumult of delight as he jogged across, utterly indifferent to the lights and intelligent audience who were regarding his movements, looked about him as if to be sure he had got to the right place, and, O ! wonder of wonders, reared himself on his hind legs at the green gate, took a cord in his mouth, and rang the bell—at least *appeared* to perform that function. For how were we to know that the cord had been artfully rubbed with some substance of a rich and savoury nature (it *may* have been dripping), or that the bell was rung behind, by no other hand than that of his master, the wicked Lesparre ! But wait. There was more to come.

To him opened the green gate a domestic of the house, plainly roused from slumber,

with a familiar bed-chamber candlestick in her hand. She looked round with inquiry for the human hand that had, of course, rung, and at last saw the faithful and intelligent animal at her feet. But mark what followed. The faithful and intelligent animal (on unseen invitation from the base Lesparre) seized the familiar candlestick in his mouth, and ambled off with it (still lighted), all his coat swinging and shaking about him. Just at the end he stops a second (the base Lesparre had got to the wing in time) and looks round over his shoulder by way of invitation, which motion has set the candle all awry, and nearly lighted up his own tail—and then exit. Noble, delightful creature!

It was only natural that on the disappearance of the noble Aubrey in the Forest of Bondy, something in the nature of an investigation should be set on foot. Was it the Colonel that took the matter up? Suspicion someway lighted on the vile Lesparre,

whose deportment, lowering, surly, and with a general tendency to folded arms when questioned, did seem [to fortify the impression abroad. Why linger over details? He was tried before some irregular tribunal; the case broke down. Already there was an air of triumphant villany on his lips; when hark! once more to the familiar note at the side. The officers of the court looked out anxiously in that direction; a lane was opened; and in came, bounding, scampering, and his great red mouth opened with frightful ferocity, the noble Dog, making straight for the wretched criminal. The wretched criminal was seen to lift his two hands to his throat, no doubt for its protection (but in the days of later scepticism I knew it was actual invitation to the animal to attach itself promptly), and then followed a most distressing scene. The wretched criminal, when he found the dog was securely fixed in his handkerchief, sloped his back inward, held his arms out, as if in the

natural agony of the moment, and began to turn round and round. The noble dog held on firmly, and by the motion was swung out in the air at a right angle. Rounds of tumultuous applause from all sides. Still, strange to say, none of the court, or even of the soldiers in cocked-hats who were standing by with their guns, interfered, but all seemed anxious to allow canine justice to take its course. Finally, without apparent reason, the strength of the vile Lesparre gave way, and he tottered to the ground, while the noble brute got over him and burrowed at his throat, and barked furiously, and at the same time wagged the cornucopia,—although as if in apparent satisfaction. At the end of all, the music braying on mournfully, the green curtain came sliding down in sad folds; the members of the court formed in an exact semicircle round the dog and the vile Lesparre, now almost exhausted; and, with feelings of alarm and terror, we saw the soldiers in

the cocked-hats pointing their muskets with deadly aim at the prostrate form of the murderer of Aubrey!

As the curtain fell, a feeling of deep grief settled on us, that we were never more to see the renowned Dog, and we were, as it were, parted from him for ever. But the audience began to raise discordant cries, which were understood as a desire to see the noble animal once more, in a sort of private capacity. And presently, the curtain being drawn aside, to our speechless delight we saw him again; that is, his huge bluff head, and red jaws and tongue, which it seemed constitutional with him to keep on view, for respiration. He withdrew it in a second, but reappeared a little suddenly, giving the idea of having been propelled on from behind. He then stepped forth gravely and deliberately, and trotted across, swinging his coat in measured beats, until he reached the other end. Then something appeared to irritate the huge flap of his ear,

and with a delightful aplomb he at once dropped into a sitting attitude, and with his hind paw proceeded diligently to alleviate this affection. The ease, the absence of shyness, the happy air, with which this operation was accomplished, would have done credit to any man of the world, trained in the very best circles. When the work was accomplished to his satisfaction, he retired, pushing the curtain aside with his nose. I question if this act, performed in a private capacity, did not endear the noble animal to us more than his more elaborate performances.

A troubled feverish sort of night followed this first mental trouble we had known. Our hearts fluttered uneasily. The gorgeous lights of the scenic world danced before our eyes. Our neat and orderly chamber, otherwise welcome, became odious and prison-like. In the morning we awoke, and came down with a heavy, heavy weight upon our soul. To look back, it seemed a

blissful night, bathed in golden purple, pink—what hue was it?—light. And the Dog! Thrice noble, grand, brave, gallant, lovable animal. Then came an internal soreness as we thought of him.

In the middle of the day, our father took us away up to London: our aunt, over whom principle and the late Mr. Wesley had now again asserted their sway, taking of us a cold and stern farewell. We were going home; there were joyful times approaching; unbounded cake, a certain freedom in a money direction, and a general licence as to manners. Home was always welcome; and with such a festival as a sister's marriage! And yet on this occasion we went forth with mournfulness. We seemed to be leaving a friend. I believe—but we did not dare even to whisper this—that if the matter were open to such an arrangement, we would have cheerfully exchanged all our chance of future joys for one more night of canine happiness. A

rash improvident contract such would have been, but we would have entered into it cheerfully. Where was he now, the noble creature? How was it with him in private life? Did he feast on the fat of the land, as a dog of such gifts should? A hundred such questions as these entertained us, as we were borne far away from him and Wearmouth.

The family were in all the flutter and confusion attendant on the sister's marriage. We were welcome, yet not very highly considered. Would overlooked be too strong an expression? And yet our treatment, generally, verged in this direction. In fact, there was mantua-making on a gigantic scale going forward within the walls of the mansion, under the personal superintendence of our mother. This accounted for any apparent deficiency in the natural affections. Nor, in sooth, did we heed it. We were changed, and it was remarked that there

was a moodiness in our bearing. Once, indeed, we broached THE DOG, and volunteered a little narrative of that evening; but they were "cutting out" at the moment, and the fervent attention, after a moment's affectation of listening, wandered away.

The bridegroom we took to amazingly. Plusher was his name—John Plusher—a good fellow, honest, rough, and—he took us out and gave us treats. O, how we liked him! Possibly next to the noble animal Cæsar, to whom our hearts yearned more and more. And very soon we were tempted to unfold to *him* the whole story of that splendid animal. Not only then, but often. Not only the mere narrative, but the most abundant details. He relished it. *His* attention did not wander. One day he proposed gifts—gifts of astounding value, to be measured by pounds—the object to be left to our election. What would we have? Come! We were not to be afraid, but to speak out. Come—a second time! We

began to blush and glow, and to drop our eyes, and finally murmured "the Dog Cæsar."

"By Jove! yes!" said Plusher. "I'll go down to-morrow, and see if the theatrical fellows are there. Or, if they are gone, we can find out where they are. We'll get him, never fear!" There was something so noble and confident in John Plusher's manner, that it quite overcame us. Noble John Plusher!

Noble John Plusher arrived the next evening, after we had spent a day of horrible anxiety. This was the intelligence he brought. A week after the famous performance, the renowned Delaval Family had departed abruptly, taking with them all their effects, which were of a portable character. Taking with them also the dog Cæsar. Perhaps this sudden disappearance (which was accompanied with secrecy and mystery) might be set down to disgust at the slender support accorded to their talents;

but there was more probability in imputing it to a sudden call for a prompt settlement of accounts, which it seems the proprietor—who had a deep acquaintance with human nature—was accustomed to insist on. In fact, the Theatre Royal, Wearmouth, was usually taken on this precarious tenure, it being its lot to become suddenly occupied and as suddenly deserted, many times in the course of the year. It would have been supposed that from his acquaintance with this curious law, the proprietor would have been wary of his tenants. But, somehow, the skilful Delaval Family had contrived to disappear, taking with them all their effects, and the renowned DOG CÆSAR. The noble creature, without any fault of his own, had departed under the odium of not being able to meet his engagements. For obvious reasons, the Delaval Family had declined to leave its address. There was no hope. The noble dog was lost to us for ever. Honest John Plusher had done his best.

The marriage day came round. It was a great festival : a splendid occasion. All the neighbourhood rejoiced. We shone in apparel perfectly new ; for, with a delicacy which we knew few would appreciate, we *could* not bring ourselves to desecrate the blue and silver waistcoat which was sacred to the memory of the renowned Dog. We were in the habit of visiting that garment tenderly, as a relic. However, on this day of universal joy, we thought it but respectful to dismiss any mournful feelings of a private nature we might entertain, and consumed, silently but steadily, large blocks of a very rich and moist wedding-cake, until we actually became inert and almost torpid. In the evening there was to be a dance—a small dance—which was anticipated with happiness.

The day was long and weary, and the evening seemed to approach very slowly. Honest John Plusher and his young wife were gone—were already miles away upon

their road towards Honest John's country-house. The tears were over, the cutting out was over. Here is now ten o'clock at last, and the party is about to begin!

We had been a little uncomfortable towards four o'clock, and had gone to lie down; but by the evening were fresh again. The rooms were lighted up, the company was arriving, and here was the music—a harp in a green baize paletot with a strap round it, a fiddle, and a cornet. Men from Chopkins's, the eminent pastrycook of the district, who had “the direction” of the banquet, were already in possession of the place. I did not see them, but I heard of these things up-stairs, as I put on more festive raiment. For a moment, I thought of the blue and silver, as the drawer was opened—as a change from the morning's apparel the effect would have been superb. It was tempting; but a better spirit prevailed.

We went down and wandered into the

dancing-room ; it was already full of lovely creatures—all flowers and general radiance. The men did not seem nearly such spiritual things. There they were, bowing, and going through their measures—a very pretty sight to look on, while the music played melodiously. The music was wedged up in a corner, a little uncomfortably; and it struck me that the harp, whose instrument, projecting at an angle, was rudely brushed at times by passing dancers, must have a weary time of it. But he bore it with an angelic patience, as of one who was used to that sort of thing : while the cornet, who carried *his* instrument gallantly, holding it out dead horizontally, and blowing with a will, and whom I now got a good view of for the first time, was—good gracious!—surely we should know *him*. What ! The pool of baldness, and the banks of bulrushes fringing it—the sad blowing expression—why, we knew him at once, though only seeing him athwart the forms of flitting dancers ! What a vicissi-

tude of fortune was this ! Surely the finger of some mysterious power was here. Again our hearts began to flutter.

As soon as the dance had stopped, we stole round to have a better look. It *was* he. There could be no mistake. His manner of discoursing the music, too, even suggested the night. At first we thought of an introduction ; but, on reflection, considered such would be a delay unnecessary. So, we went up to him and boldly recalled to him the Wearmouth Theatre—and—THE DOG. He was much confused at first, yet nobly admitted the connexion. We entered freely into conversation. He had indeed been attached to the Delaval Family ; but they were “ a bad lot.” Even, he would go so far as to say, a shabby lot. They lived by defrauding humble people who were struggling to maintain their families. He had done with them. The Dog ? Oh yes. Clever enough, but nothing *as* a dog.

Here the leader tapped the back of his

fiddle impatiently, the harp was tilted back on the shoulder of its proprietor, and they struck into the popular Fury Galop. I was left in the tortures of expectancy to know what had become of the renowned Dog Cæsar. I would wait until the next interval; and in the mean while, as I was standing thoughtfully, determined not to lose sight of the cornet-player, a massively built military person, coming round with express velocity, struck me heavily, and nearly flung me across the fender. At last the Fury Galop was done, and I drew near to my cornet-player, with whom I might now be said to be very intimate. He was good natured, but he said it was dry work. Wondering could he mean any reference to sherry, I put a decanter near him on the chance. He understood my delicacy. I told him my story. He sympathised with my affection for the noble creature. He himself was not possessed of much information as to the present residence of the Delaval

Family; but he had a brother——Where? where?

He hesitated a little; but he told me all eventually. His brother, like himself, had had dealings with the Delaval Family; and, like himself, had, so to speak, been betrayed by the Delaval Family—sold, I believe, was the word he used, which, though indistinct, conveyed to me the idea of horribly base treatment. This brother, the victim of the Delavals, could give information on the subject; but there would be, the cornet-player owned, much delicacy necessary in dealing with him; for he was a man of peculiar temperament, rendered sensitive by his reverses, and who had moved in far higher walks of life. At this juncture the harp again reeled back on its proprietor's shoulder, and the whole band struck vigorously into the opening bars of *The Lancers*. A "set" forming close by, imprisoned me for a considerable period, but I got free at

last, and stood at the door, burning for further particulars.

As I stood, a voice was borne to my ears, which did, indeed, seem tuned in a familiar chord. It seemed that I had heard it somewhere in the past, a richly measured cadence, something like chanting. Good gracious! what did this mean? Events were crowding so thickly on this momentous night! I struggled to the door, and looked out. I saw nothing, heard nothing; our mother was sitting there in state outside, on a cane-bottomed chair, to receive the company. It was perilous to speak to her. Where was the voice? Hark! There it rang out again! "Mr. and Mrs. Jenkinwaters! Miss Jenkinwaters! Mr. Alfred Jenkinwaters! Major Pumpes!" Surely it was the voice of the noble Aubrey? But here was a stately man, in a white tie and a white waistcoat, stepping up-stairs, with a bearing infinitely majestic, a herald to the Jenkinwaters family.

I could not recognise him. I should never have known him. But the voice still rang musically in my ears. And yet there was a mournfulness in his deportment, an air of suffering and placid resignation in the way in which he went through his function, that was to me inexpressibly affecting. I longed to accost him, to enter into familiar relations with him. But I durst not; for our mother was still sitting enthroned in the cane-bottomed chair.

I got back to the cornet, with whom I was now on a footing of deep and confidential intercourse. "I have seen him," I whispered on the stairs. "Mr. Lorimer is——" (The noble Aubrey was Lorimer in the hills.) "Hush! hush!" said the cornet, looking round. "There ain't no Lorimers here. That's for the stage, you know. Perkeboyes is *his* name." "But," said I, "Mr. Lorimer——" "I ain't Lorimer neither," he said, a little pettishly. "Valvoni—Signor Valvoni's *my* name." Won-

dering at this curious difference in the case of those who were brothers, I was yet restrained from further inquiries by a rather intimidating manner on the part of Signor Valvoni. And yet more curious still, this gentleman imparted to me that the name of the Delaval Family was *not* Delaval, but Pilchard. The whole, therefore, became greatly confused.

Before the night was over, it was settled that my friend the cornet should arrange with his brother: who was too sensitive, after his gross treatment at the hands of the Delaval Family, to endure any allusion to the subject from third parties. He would communicate the result at a pastrycook's some two streets away. He originally proposed the assignation at a public-house; but that I firmly declined.

Now it was that I missed the supporting aid of Honest John Plusher. The whole weight of the negotiation was thrown upon my shoulders. And yet the first thing ne-

cessary, I felt, was to put myself entirely in his hands, far away as he was. I was much pleased with the shape of this sentiment, and got it by heart in bed, the next night; though, indeed, I believe this putting myself in his hands was, perhaps, but an inducement to *his* putting something in *my* hands. Still he had promised, and so I determined to appeal to him in a manly way. This expression also struck me as being fine, and I got it also by heart in bed. The result of the whole was a letter composed after many hours of agony (the procuring the note-paper involving the sin of larceny), a strange production, made up of many tottering capitals, and suffering from caligraphic cramps and palsy:

“ my dear john,—i hope you are quite well, and I hope sister Jane is quite well also. i and mama are very well too. i met a man who heard of the dog—i wish you were here—to put myself freely in your

hands in a manly way—far away as he was. please write.

“Ever your affectionate and friendly brother.”

It struck me nothing could be more delicate, or even elegant, than the way in which this was put. I read it over several times. I read it to my younger brother, who was lost in admiration, and sucked his thumb with wonder. I even—vanity getting the better of prudence—read it privately to Mary the housemaid. She kindly advanced me the sum of a penny on my own personal security, to defray the postage.

By return, came a letter from Honest John. Such a letter! I had not miscalculated his noble nature in putting myself so freely in his hands, far away as he was. Nothing could be nobler, grander, than his conduct. He said, leave it all to him; he would manage it: and let Perkeboyes, or Lorimer, or Valvoni, or whoever was the

proprietor, put himself in direct communication with *him*. He was up in Town in about a week. He kept the assignation at the pastrycook's; in another fortnight, the renowned Dog Cæsar had retired from his dramatic career, and become a member of our family.

I believe the Delaval Family must have been in sad straits about this time, from the physical condition of the frame of the noble animal. There had been a conjoined indifference in the public mind both to the family and the unrivalled animal. However this might be, they were eager to part with their dog. They parted with him for, I believe, a not extravagant sum, the amount of which the innate delicacy of Honest John would never let me know.

My mother naturally objected to receive the noble dog into her family, but she was a tender woman, and gave way. After his first meal, consumed with a frightful greediness, the result of many days' abstinence, he

at once showed a disposition to enter into the most cordial relations. He gained rapidly on all the members of the household. There was an honest bluntness, a plain straightforward manner, about him, that conciliated all. He kept his great mouth and red tongue always on view, and panted habitually, like a sort of canine steam-engine. He was so large and great and stately: so reasonable, and so quiet: that it was impossible to overlook him, or consider him other than one of the regular members of the family. He asserted himself firmly, yet not obtrusively.

Strange to say, he could never be got to go through any of his dramatic efforts: such as ringing bells, or carrying flat candlesticks in his mouth. Any approaches in this direction he seemed to shun as though it were a discreditable page in his life which he would willingly blot out. His connexion with the Delaval Family he would have the world forget; he showed his sense of the

indelicacy of any allusion to the subject—which might take the shape of hanging an imitation bell-cord before his nose, or trying to encourage him to take up a flat candlestick in his mouth—by raising himself slowly on his feet, and walking slowly and heavily from the room.

But he had other fancies and accomplishments which were very pleasant, and which, as being of an unprofessional nature, he never had any objection to exhibit. On being invited to "Speak!" he would gather himself up, simulate a certain ferocity, and finally deliver himself of a startling bark in a full deep key. Or, he would be shown, say a glove, or a whip, or other portable article capable of being conveniently carried in his mouth, and would be then brought away down into the street, round the corner, up past the square, for a quarter of a mile or more. His demeanour during this interval would be of a strange and mysterious for he would walk with his great black

eyes fixed steadily, and with a painfully earnest expression, on the face of the party directing the experiment. To smile, or even allow a muscle to stir, was fatal ; he instantly interpreted it as a signal of acquiescence, and was off and away, bounding along in a sort of heavy gallop, his tongue lolling out, his great ears swinging like saddle-bags, and the momentum of his progress clearly dangerous to unguarded passers-by. The door being left open, he would come tearing upstairs, dash in rudely and boisterously, seize the article, and disappear. It was dangerous to play any trick with him on these occasions, for he felt that it was a question of character, and he allowed no consideration to stand between him and duty. The flat candlestick was once tried to be palmed on him by an artifice—an insult which he resented by withdrawing himself from all friendly intercourse with the family for the space of nearly a day and a night.

The hours of joy and social entertainment

I spent in the society of this noble creature are not to be described. He was positively a second brother to me. Our walks were delightful. In the house he enjoyed universal respect, as a sensible, well-bred, kind, generous, high-souled gentleman, who would not descend to a mean action for the world. From the housemaids, especially, not a breath ever came to tarnish his good name. His memory is still green, and——Ah! his memory! I must come to that now.

It fell out in this way. We had gone to our country-house. It was a Saturday night, and extensive painting operations, carried on diligently through the whole week, were at last happily concluded. The house was fresh and resplendent, and we felt a natural pride in its glory. We had had a very happy day with our friend, who was only himself properly when in the country. He liked going out on expeditions with me, to hunt the stray rabbit, or the odd cat. He loved the green fields, and when he came to water,

would go in with pleasure to himself and joy to me. I always liked his performances in this direction the most. We came home together much tired, and I remember, as we came in late, and stood near the stable, where he resided, his putting his great cold nose into the palm of my hand, with a sort of rough affection. Poor Cæsar! I recollect that Saturday so well! We went to bed; but I remember being awakened with a start, and finding the butler, in his waistcoat, standing over me with a lighted candle. "Hush, Master Jack," he said. "Get up and come down. Poor Cæsar! The poor dog!" I started up, and was dressed in a moment. "Hush, Master Jack! Don't let the mistress hear." "And what is it?" said I, very agitated. "Oh, he's bad, he's very bad. I'm afraid——"

We hurried down and crossed the yard to the wooden tenement where poor Cæsar usually resided. The butler carried the candle—one of the old old objectionable

flat candlesticks. As we came near, we heard mournful and piteous groans, and there, at his kennel door, was stretched out helplessly—his noble flank heaving distressfully—his head rising and falling again on the flags, with short gasps—the brave creature, the dear dear dog, the gallant Cæsar! “Those painters!” said the butler. “Some of their stuff had got mixed with his food.” “Call up the house—fetch a doctor,” I cried, distractedly. The butler was a sombre man. He shook his head. “In a few minutes he’ll be past that! the poor brute.” I remember I wept over him. “See!” said the butler, holding down the candle. The light fell upon his head, still working up and down convulsively. I called to him despairingly, “Cæsar! Good dog! *Good* fellow! Poor Cæsar! *Old* fellow!” I was choking, and here fairly burst out. “He don’t know you, Master Jack,” said the butler, still holding down the light. The large bright eyes—those fine eyes always so admired—were glazing

very fast, and the eyelids were dropping down quietly over them. "Good dog!" I cried again, quite hysterically. "Poor fellow! Don't you know me? Dear old fellow, *don't* you?" The glazing eyes gave no sign; but the large bushy tail, which had been lying out quite straight and limp, now began to move ever so softly—the motion was almost imperceptible, just as if a breeze was stirring the hair a little. That grateful recognition from the dying dog was inexpressibly sweet to think of, long, long afterwards. And then the butler, who was naturally a humane man, took me away into the house.

This is the simple history of the renowned Dog Cæsar, once the property of the Delaval Family.

By the time this little narrative was finished, many of the company had dropped in, principally the young men, who, with a sort of honest gallantry, delighted in the company of such a little queen. They paid

her all manner of homage, and she received and treated them with a little graciousness almost royal. By this time she had forgotten the steel bands, and was in great spirits.

"Uncle Broughton," she said, "has been telling me *such* a story, about *such* a darling dog. O! but he died. Wasn't it dreadful, Mr. Singleman? And died so cruelly. It would make you cry if you had heard it. I don't think I would care to have a dog now," she added, with deep compassion.

Mr. Singleman sighed for himself, drew out his shirt-sleeves and looked at them with deep interest, as though the secret of his sorrows were hidden somewhere in his sleeve-links.

"We all must suffer," he said, "Miss Alice."

He then looked down and abstractedly widened the space between his knees as though to make room for his favourite violincello.

"We shall have a dog for you the first thing in the morning, darling," said her father, stooping down over her, "and he shall be brought in here and sit with you, if you like."

Mrs. Bruce, under other circumstances, would have entered a protest against the presence of dogs in the house, or upon carpets. But she was softened, and though acutely suffering at the bare idea, would have herself introduced the Newfoundland to the rug.

"Tell me about it again—about another dog," said Fairy Alice, suddenly, and with a little smile.

"Ah! I never had another after that," said Mr. Broughton, sadly, "and never shall, I think. No. At least not a dog that was on the stage—a real stage—mind."

(Mr. Singleman had found this conversation empty and not satisfying, and had strayed away into the drawing-room in

search of female society, which was as necessary to him as the air he breathed.)

"Well, tell me something, uncle," she said, coaxingly, "about anything. O, I laughed so to-day when you were at dinner, thinking of you shut up in the yard. It was so funny, uncle, I *couldn't* help it."

"Let me see," said Uncle Broughton, really searching his memory in some distress. "What have I? My life has been humdrum enough. Let me see? Were you ever at a pantomime, dear?"

"O no!" said Fairy Alice, half devoutly, as if the notion was too grand and overpowering to be approached without preparation by her little soul; "but papa says, perhaps next Christmas——"

"Perhaps!" said Mr. Bruce, eagerly. "No perhaps at all, but certainly. We shall make an expedition up to Town expressly. A pantomime! No, we shall go round them all regularly; begin at Covent Garden, and go downwards to the

last minor theatre across the bridge. There, darling !”

During this gorgeous promise of happiness, Fairy Alice had actually been obliged to close her eyes from a sense of happiness, and had interrupted it with little short spasms or ejaculations of “O ! O ! papa !” At the end she raised her head and kissed him.

“O, you are so good, dearest papa,” she said.

“Wait,” said Mr. Broughton ; “I have it now. I’ll tell you about the night I went to my first pantomime. I won’t tell you how many years ago. No, no. And you won’t laugh at me ?”

This was promised, and Uncle Broughton told a recollection of his boyhood about a pantomime.

HARLEQUIN FAIRY MORGANA.

It was about four o’clock of a Monday evening (to be particular), and only three days after the festival of Christmas-day (to

be a little more particular still) ; when the atmosphere was still pleasantly charged with particles of plum-pudding ; when a fresh, inspiriting, and, on the whole, not disagreeable darkness was setting in ; and when up in London, some five miles away, the marvellous lamplighters were busy—how wistfully did we regard the delightful agility of those acrobats, and how often lament, when meditating a choice of life under the school blankets, that we could not be sent into *that* profession instead of the Church, Bar, or Medicine!—I say it was at this season of the year, and at this particular season of the evening, that word was passed down the playground that Young Broughton was wanted by Old Bridles in the parlour. The first of these descriptions referred to myself, and was scarcely distinguished by nice logical accuracy. For, I had not to be kept separate from any other Broughton, young or old, and the adjective, though characteristic, was mere surplusage.

"Old Bridles," though familiar and verging on the disrespectful, was happier as a descriptive personal portrait. He was known more awfully as the "Rev. J. C. Bridles, D.D., who was prepared to receive a limited number of youths into his family, to be fitted for the learned professions," the youths of more tender years being subjected to the immediate personal superintendence of Mrs. Bridles: a supervision, however, whose benefits she kindly extended to all the young gentlemen of the establishment.

I took my way slowly and without enthusiasm, to the presence of Old Bridles. A few days ago, alas! it had been different. The ceremonial of being cited to the awe-inspiring parlour had then become riotously frequent; crowds were rushing in that direction. But now the place had lost its reverence. The boarders were going home *en masse*; all excepting myself and a few colonial young gentle-

men. My father had been obliged to go abroad for health's sake, and so I was left with Old Bridles.

During this festive time Doctor Bridles fell into a kind of paternal manner, which fitted him uneasily. He was now in the parlour, in his curule chair. He held a letter in his hand. "Broughton," he said, "I have sent for you." (This I knew.) "I have sent for you," he repeated, and his face assumed an expression of severe Roman majesty, which was kept among the parlour properties for situations of importance. I grew uneasy in my mind. There was that guilty business of the two apples—*débris* of the parlour dessert, spoliated mysteriously—and spectres of the purloined fruit began to disturb me. That had been six weeks ago ; but it was known that the school police was always vigilant, and that a statute of limitations was not to hold in shielding malefactors from the offended laws of their country. I, Young Broughton, trembled

before Old Bridles. The revulsion was tremendous, when, instead of calling in the lictors, the doctor said, in his grandest manner, "Broughton, you are to go home!" Something like a whole magazine of squibs, crackers, and yet more magnificent Catherine-wheels, seemed to have been suddenly discharged at my feet. The parlour became filled with light, the bells began to ring, the music to play.

When the details came out, it was found that I was not going home, strictly speaking. It was Plusher—Plusher who had married my own and best loved sister—Plusher the noble, the brave, the gallant, the beautiful—Plusher of the Dog, who had come forward in this splendid manner, at the last moment—but not too late. To say the truth, I had privately reckoned on Plusher all along, and had been deeply wounded—wounded to the quick—as Christmas-eve wore on, and I found Plusher not coming

forward in the brave handsome way that might be expected from Plusher. Yet it was more in grief than in anger; and it was only when all hope did indeed seem fled, and when Plusher was proved by all human calculation, and the arrival of the last train, to be false, that I fairly gave way—that is, repaired to a private place and howled mournfully. And yet, even then, the glaring inconsistency in Plusher's behaviour struck my youthful mind. Why so surpassingly brave, generous, noble, on one occasion, and now——? Perhaps there was some evil agency at work—a cloud or a fiend (either would do)—and before I would tear him from my heart, perhaps——But I am afraid I *did* tear Honest Plusher from my heart that very night when retiring to my lonely pillow.

However, he had now redeemed himself nobly, splendidly, superbly. He was John Plusher still, which of course he would have been under any circumstances. But

he was the *old* John Plusher with three times three, and nine times nine, and English hearths, and homes, and the British Grenadiers.

In a flurry and a flutter truly delightful, and with the pistons of a small portable steam-engine thumping up and down over my heart, I left Doctor Bridles's roof. I did not care to affect the decent grief which, as part of the deportment at parting, the rules of the establishment required. I went my way with unconcealed joy; the doctor measuring me with his severest Roman eye. Ah, what days of delight those old days of going home!—the moments devoted to packing—to the agitated, disordered, imperfect process, known as packing. There was none of that skill or science in the operation which comes later with grown-up personal responsibility. For then all our property was in trustees: held to our use as it were, and at the peril of those clothed

with the trust. Charming function ! And how pleasing that flutter, that palpitation of the heart, verging almost on symptoms of disease ; that exquisite feeling of unrest and unquiet which was almost painful, and yet was acceptable. Delicious ceremony of "going home !"

John Plusher welcomed me at the station, waiting patiently with a stick under his arm, carried much as a cavalry officer carries his sword, and a face so alight with good humour that it looked as if he had got some one to hold a wax-candle inside !. Noble, Honest John ! but I did not tell how my faith in him had faltered. He wrung my hand, and addressed me cheerfully. (He always seemed to speak in a series of short modulated shouts.) In the cab he mapped out a whole programme of entertainments, graduated in a sort of series, and something allotted to each day. Such Eastern liberality made me literally gasp, and I could only murmur uncouth sounds, meant for thanks,

proceeding from me in a half savage state. I was not fluent by nature; and could only exhibit my gratitude in a gamut of "O's," increasing in intensity. The banquet was indeed bewildering; the Waxwork, the Voyage in the Balloon (on the dioramic principle) which would take us to visit the Principal Cities of Europe (how delightful when the canvas moved on slowly, a little wrinkled, and the music began, and the gentleman-like lecturer announced that the next "voo" would depict the Halt of the Caravan in the Desert!); the Crystal Palace, the Polytechnic (including a real descent in the diving-bell), and O! I began to breathe thickly as he named that place of Paradise, **THE PANTOMIME!**

I am afraid, when I thought so affectionately of going home to Honest John Plusher, some gorgeous picture associated with this class of entertainment was before my eyes. Perhaps he stood in the place of the heavy green curtain which was to rise slowly, and

give place to gorgeous delights. Perhaps the notion was mixed. Once before I had been taken to this splendid spectacle ; and though then of very tender years, and with sensibilities scarcely developed, the impression left had been of something so exquisitely unearthly, so paradisiacal, that I could never look back to it without an uneasy feeling reaching nearly to pain. I durst not dwell long upon it, as I was accustomed to do upon other matters, in the little apartment, under the blankets, where I used to cover up my head. And though, knowing John Plusher so well as I now did, I might reasonably have expected liberal behaviour from him, still I felt that these rarer and more exquisite joys were uncertain in their fruition, and that the cup might be dashed from my lips at any moment. An ill-omened rumour had reached me that my sister—who had, very properly, influence over John Plusher—had begun to think plays sinful, and was actually sitting under

the Reverend Puncher Hill, minister of the Little Tabernacle.

But these were idle visions. As we drove along in the cab, I reassured myself. Not only was I to go to the pantomime, but I discovered by a line of adroit cross-examination, that even my best beloved sister, Mrs. Honest John Plusher, or Honest Mrs. John Plusher, would likewise attend. The line of adroit cross-examination was something after this fashion :

“I say, Cousin John”—this was not an accurate description of the relationship, but I always called him Cousin John—“I say, does sister like the Reverend Puncher Hill?”

“No!” said Cousin John Plusher, with amazement. “Not that I know of! Who is he? Where did you pick up that name?”

“Nothing,” I said, breaking down suddenly at the opening of the adroit cross-examination, “but I thought she *went* to him.”

“Lord bless me, no,—at least,” added

John Plusher, "not that I know of. Why should she go to him? When——"

"O, to hear him," I said.

"Why should she hear him?" cried John Plusher, a little bewildered, and I often think that for the moment, and for the first time in his life, I had sown domestic uneasiness in Honest John's conjugal heart. "What is to be heard from him?"

"O, the pulpit," I said.

"Not she," said John Plusher; "we both go to the parish church, to good Mr. Burkinshaw."

"O *then*," I said, joyfully, "she will go to the—the—PANTOMIME." (I always felt an awful agitation in naming this word.) And Honest John, though scarcely seeing how this conclusion could logically flow from the abstraction of the Reverend Puncher Hill from the question, said heartily, "To be sure she'll go; we'll all go, and make a jolly party of it."

More than that. It was revealed presently

that a night had actually been fixed—the following night. More again than that. Places had been secured at the regular box-office, and of the regular person: who sat, with mystery, in a hutch off the street, and, strange to say, kept his wits, and was calm, though having the prerogative of admitting enraptured gazers to view the delights which lay behind. How he could restrain himself, and not rush away, leaving tickets, box-office, box-keepers, and box-takers, was to me a spectacle of calm and beautiful self-control. John Plusher took out a pocket-book and showed me the real tickets—one, two, three, four, five—all pink, and new and clean, and stiff. There was a halo of nimbus round each, and I handled them with reverence. Box voucher too: “Mr. Warbeck, Box Book-keeper.” Melodious description! And then the little note, by way of warning or caution, “Seats will not be retained after the first act,” whose significance I could not bring home to myself

even after deep and painful thought. For how *could* I realise to myself the existence of Beings so constituted as not to arrive at the doors of the theatre hours *before* the first act had commenced.

The interval, though dragging at times somewhat wearily, yet, by the agency of various Christmas joys, passed with surprising swiftness. Some toys were brought in by Honest John: notably a drummer who played by turning a wire winch under the grass and gravel on which he stood; and, more notably still, a real locomotive, which by the agency, I believe, of secret clockwork, flew round and round on the floor at a frightful express pace. The sensation produced by this bit of mechanism was a source of unabated pleasure, until, strange to say, after only a few hours' traffic, it broke down (I now believe from overwinding), and never could be got to work upon the line again. Any attempts to re-

pair the machinery were only met by alarming whirring sounds from the inside. These helped the day forward. But, in all justice, it should be mentioned that very much lay upon the noble foundation of all Christmas joys — plum-pudding. The sight of this delicacy, both cold and in fried slabs, which were conditions of its second visit to John Plusher's board, did much to allay impatience. And, indeed, so hearty was my appreciation of its merits in the slabular shape, that I must make the humiliating confession that I came to regard this cherished friend, for a few hours afterwards, with feelings of loathing and repugnance.

I had asked John Plusher to purchase for me a Bill of the performance, that I might study the leading features at leisure. He had done so. A sort of heavenly programme, printed in blue characters, with a fragrance that seemed to exhale from it. The blue—though it *must* have been ordi-

nary printing ink—seemed to glow with a gentle cerulean light. Even the thin tissue paper, so soft and gentle, was, as it were, in keeping

I read every word of it—that is, I and another boy, Chopcross by name, who listened in stupid wonder (and terror also, I believe) as I read aloud to him the list of glories we were to enjoy. It was like the music of an orchestra. The superlatives and rapturous expressions of personal self-laudation, in which I have since remarked these productions indulge, were like full chords. The name was “HARLEQUIN FATA MORGANA; or, The Lovely Fairy Bright Eyes.” The overture and “incidental music” was by Mr. W. Burchell; the “new and sumptuous scenery” by Mr. Marshall Mal- lows; the costumes by Mrs. Walker and assistants (happy assistants!); the tricks and mechanical effects by Gradwell and *his* assistants (perhaps more to be envied than Mrs. Walker and *hers*!); the monstrous heads

were under some one's personal superintendence; in short, I was struck with awe at the enormous number of persons, each representing departments, who had contributed to the gigantic work. It did not occur to me at the time that this might have been the intended effect of these announcements. I saw, too, that the "Choreographic arrangements" were by Miss Robespierre, of the Royal Conservatoire, Brussels, and that the ballet would be full, numerous, and efficient. And then the scenes, each so lusciously described! There was the interior of Mother Bunch's Cottage, with old Mother Bunch herself, and other characters with delightful names. Then, came the Fairies' Glade and Bowers of Pastoral Delight; then, a room in the King's Palace; and so on—until we reached the "Matchless Transformation Scene!" Then I saw that the "Unrivalled Merlini Family were engaged to give due effect to the Harlequinade." I may say many hours of the day were con-

sumed in devouring this enchanted document.

It was a nervous time. Even so early as noon, I and the boy who was my contemporary began to have uneasy apprehensions as to being late, and moved about in a restless troubled way. At four o'clock, too long restrained by judicious remonstrance, it was resolved to commence the toilette for the night. This, it need scarcely be said, was on a splendid scale: the appointments and properties being of the most sumptuous description. Dinner was a pure feint. I almost felt indignant with Honest John Plusher for the calm and unfeeling manner—the as it were purposely protracted fashion—in which he consumed his food. At last the moment came; the cab was at the door, and we—I and the Contemporary Boy—rushed down with a cry of relief.

Five of us in all—John Plusher, Mrs. John, the Contemporary Boy, and a male

friend of habitual good spirits—all went in, or *on*, the cab; for the Contemporary Boy was put outside with the coachman. We were hours getting to the Palace of Enchanted Delights (I believe the time consumed was a little over ten minutes), but we did get there at last. A stately building, with columns, lights, an air of excitement, and, O! light bursting from within, and the old delicious inexpressible fragrance of commingled gas, damp sawdust, and squeezed orange-peel.

But when we trod the Gallery of Enchantment, dotted round with scarlet doors, each with a sort of peep-show glass inserted, and met crowds of delighted creatures tramping round like ourselves in a disordered procession, and who were gradually let in at the little red doors, and when Mr. Warbeck, one of the most polite and first-gentlemanly of creatures, whose manners seemed to me the true ideal of all that was courtly and gracious, came in a hurry

with keys, and threw open for *us* a little door (some previous confidential solemnities having passed between him and Cousin John), then I and the Contemporary Boy rushed headlong and tumultuously down to the very front row into the very bosom of the theatre. Theatre! Far too earthy a word. Soft realms of celestial light, happiness, and joy! The light ambrosial—the gay colours of Paradise—and bright circles, not surely of men, women, little girls and little boys, but of men, women, and children glorified! It was the all-suffusing light that did it.

There was a play going on. Not yet had fashion swept away the old custom of introducing the festival with some sound fruity old comedy of a didactic sort—even with the story of the unhappy 'prentice of the name of Barnwell. Barnwell was not to-night; but a delightful drama, softly mysterious and absorbing—The Castle Spectre! Ever welcome—even now, when the sense of ro-

mance has grown dull, and the varnish is scoured off. What an interest in that artfully-constructed story! How grand the chief villain, Earl Osman, in the white furred cloak; and, as a picture of unscrupulous ferocious obedience, how wonderful the faithful black—Hassan, I believe, his name. And the Castle! And the Friar! And the comic person called Motley. And Angela—the persecuted Angela! And the escape through the window when the blacks were absorbed in dice! And the spectre! And the music! It was very delightful!

But what were these pleasures to what was to come, when the overture to Harlequin Fata Morgana struck up, and all the funny tunes I had ever heard on the organs, came artfully stealing in, popping up one after the other like old friends playing us tricks. And then, when the last chord had sounded, and the curtain drew up slowly, and revealed the interior of Old Mother Bunch's Cottage, with implements of cookery

on a gigantic scale, and an enormous kitchen-range, with a gigantic cat sitting by the fire, and Old Mother Bunch herself—a terror-inspiring creature in a peaked witch's cap—I say, when we saw this prelude, forthwith I and the Contemporary Boy became fascinated, enthralled, bewildered, and drawn into one absorbing devouring gaze towards the stage. Round and round about us were little heads, peering, I *now* recollect, just over the edge of the boxes; and below the little heads were bits of bright scarlet border and velvet jackets; and when the cat ambled about, or scratched its ear, after the manner of real cats, the little heads shook, and were agitated brightly, like silk shot with silver, and round us rang out the music of laughter in a high key. But for me it was otherwise—it was *too* delightful, too seriously absorbing to laugh at. And now—Mother Bunch's home dividing in two, and sliding away with all the monster kitchen utensils—to the right and left,

breaks upon us the Glittering Glade of the Fairies, and the Valley of Golden Foliage ! And with the appearance of that dazzling retreat, and seat of exquisite delight, came my Fate.

Only think ! A glade whereof the trees and branches, reaching as far as the eye could go, were all of yellow molten gold, and the whole bathed in a rich effulgence, half yellow, half pink ! This prepared me for the cloud of angels dressed in floating clouds or vapour (not, surely, muslin ?), who glided out from among the golden trees. But alas ! it did *not* prepare me for *HER*, who, after the divine creatures had performed some motions and groupings of their own—exquisitely graceful—came tripping down from the very end of the glade : the Fairy Queen herself, with a glittering silver wand in her hand, dressed in blue vapour shot with silver, the surpassing lovely Queen Morgana herself ! At that moment I felt a feeling—I can only liken to

a sort of wrench—at my heart; and O! from that moment I was an undone ma—boy I mean. A divinity, surely, hired secretly from somewhere up in the regions we heard of on Sundays (was this sinful?), merely to come down for a short span and then return! Her arms, not purely arms, rather the imperfect development of wings; not flesh, but a kind of divine pink essence, illuminated from within! And those le—those — supports, on which she floated, now hither, now thither, of ambrosial pink, and also surely illuminated from within! O! if feet (for I could not wholly shut out the idea) they must be called, were they not spiritualised feet? It was not walking, but floating. What motions! What curves! What flying in and out among her subjects! As I said, from that moment I was a gone ma—boy I mean.

How obsequious, servile almost, were the fairies to her slightest wish—as, indeed, was very fitting. How they spread out like a

human fan, like a human star; how they floated and drifted to the sides, and left the divine visitant in the centre—as, indeed, was only fitting. How gracious she was in her dominion—how charmingly soft and even winning in her commands, for one gifted with such awful powers! Then, when the dancing set in, and ravishing music played, and she floated and swam and rose and sank, all in the air, the element natural to her, my bewildered senses became enthralled, until, at last, two dark terrible screens came together on each side, joined in the middle, and the golden vale and the golden trees, steeped and bathed in liquid light, were shut out from view. I did not so much care for the golden trees, or for the hut, or a cottage, but, alas! so too was the ambrosial fairy queen.

The procession came on now, the soldiers with the monstrous heads, some rueful, some idiotic, with halberds on their shoulders, tramping in to a comic march, and last the

testy king—was he named Grumgrowdowski the First?—all filling the house with peals of convulsive laughter. The little heads were rolling about as if filled with mercury; the Contemporary Boy, who had before shown a tendency to acute spasms of mirth, now fell into a sort of agony of laughter, and dropped back suffering much. Honest John Plusher was roaring loudly, as his peculiar manner was; but I—I believe to their wonder—remained unmoved. The spectacle of the idiotic, or even rueful beefeater, did not affect *me*; I gazed at the antics of the beefeaters stolidly, steadily, stupidly, and mournfully. I had a load of lead upon my heart—I felt a wistful aching that this poor grimacing could not satisfy. I was thinking of *her*, longing for *her* to return. And so the comic procession was re-formed, and danced off as they had danced on, the testy king last of all, performing what I suppose was conceived an exquisitely funny dance by himself, for he was called on to

do it again, with frantic screams. I never even smiled. I was longing for him to be done, and was delighted when he skipped away to the side with a stupid jump and became lost to view—for I was looking anxiously for her to reappear. Now, surely she would come again. But no!—it was an Open Country, with a mill and a bridge, with a miller, and a procession of men carrying sacks. The miller, and his men also, had heads all knobbed and pink, like a particular growth of potato, known, I believe, as the kidney. Everything they did was welcomed with screams, especially when the miller himself tumbled into the stream. But in this merriment I *could* not join.

I was getting unutterably low-spirited. Even the Contemporary Boy, now well-nigh rolling under the seat in hysterical convulsion, for a moment looked at me strangely and seriously. Honest John Plusher whispered, "What's up, Jack?" but I put him back impatiently, for, at that moment,

crossing the bridge, was a figure meant to be that of an aged crone disguised in a sort of domino and hood, but whom I, and no one else I believe in the theatre, with a marvellous instinct, recognised as the exquisite ambrosial creature from above. This marvellous instinct was in some degree assisted by a glimpse of a glittering raiment, as it were, of liquid silver, hidden underneath; but I knew her figure at once. For the time I felt an inexpressible relief, and when, for the purpose of requiting the miller's daughter's humanity, she ultimately revealed herself in all her true celestial essence (as I said before, not mere flesh, but something in the nature of manna, or say of pale pink sugar illuminated from within), I gave way to my feelings in a torrent of delight. Short-lived happiness! She presently passed away, and then came the stupid comic thing again, and the beef-eaters, and fresh palace interiors, and then a dark place, with many people huddled

together, and then *she* appeared again out of the ground, bearing her silver wand, and looking—as it was plain to be seen *she was*—an angel among earthy and earthly creatures. Then she began to speak, to declaim in the language of her own celestial country—waving her wand, and almost singing, so sweet was her voice—and then the back opened. Then cascades of molten silver began to flow, and gigantic ferns to open, and glorified women to ascend slowly, and light to be turned on in streams and floods, and I to be generally dazzled, bewildered, and suffering from a sense of exquisite oppression! Then, pillars began to be revealed, pillars that revolved and glistened, and more ferns to open, and angels to ascend in pairs; and then in the centre rose a fountain, which seemed to stream a rain of gold, and then with delighted applause bursting out on all sides, the waters of the fountain parted, and then in the centre was discovered *she* who I thought was lost to

me for ever, more ambrosial, more celestial, more roseate, than before, there enthroned as Queen, silver wand in hand, with all bending to her! I felt a thrill of joy, and yet I had a dismal presentiment that the end was not far away.

So it proved to be. The minor heavenly beings floated away in ranks to each side, and the celestial creature began to speak,—O, how melodiously! some farewell words. Not without a tinge of mournful sadness her utterances rose and fell. I could have listened for ever to that dying fall. My foreboding was fatally true. With her marvellous power, she was about transforming the Miller, Mother Bunch herself, and others, into new and strange shapes—Harlequin, Clown, Pantaloon, and Columbine (Miss Robespierre standing dressed already at the wing). A wave of that wand, and it was done. Miss Robespierre came bounding on (ah! how easy to know that *she* was a mere creature of earth, hired

at so much per night) ; the Clown turned in his toes, and leered at us, and asked, How We were to-morrow ; Harlequin glittered like a snake ; and what I have since heard called "the comic business," set fairly in. But with this buffoonery the divine fires of transformation faded out. I had one last exquisite glimpse of the lovely fairy Morgana, more bright, more ambrosial than ever, waving her wand, when the two halves of a street came rushing together from the side, and the establishments of Mr. Beefley, a butcher, and of Harmony and Co., music-sellers—met in the centre, and shut her out from me for ever !

Then set in, the old confusion, convulsing all round—houses changed into kitchens, gardens into steam-boats, and vegetable shops into railway trains. The Clown and his decrepit friend took lodgings together, and when they sat down found their seats lifting them to the ceiling. Articles of food were purloined from traders' shops,

the shopman always coming out into the street to arrange his bargain, and thus leaving his wares an easy prey to the evil-disposed and designing. Customers' heads were cut off, and fastened on again by the adhesive agency of the first glue-pot that chanced to pass by.

Finally, it came to an end, and we went our way. Going home, Honest John talked exuberantly of the whole performance, dwelling specially on the theft by the Clown of a lady's crinoline, and his converting of its wires into a sort of meat-safe, and hanging it round with rabbits, cats, and live poultry; "one of the best things he ever saw in the whole course of his life:" Mrs. Honest John fancied something else; the Contemporary Boy rather leant to the policeman scenes; but, will it be believed—poor blinded things—they were insensible to *her*. Not one of them mentioned her. "*He* didn't like it," said Honest John, pointing to me. "Something was

wrong. I saw it. He won't tell us what." My sister whispered softly, "You were not well, dear. I was afraid——" In the darkness of the cab I resented this: it was too much—for she had indeed gently warned me at dinner, when I believe for the third time I had——But it was not the rich slabs of fried. How little they understood me! I could not explain, and I have an idea that they set me down as sulky.

It was a relief to get to my lonely chamber. Though there was a fire, it was as cold as a hovel. The walls, though covered with pictures, were bare. "Bare and blank," I repeated. There, in solitude, I could call up the enchanting image, and feast upon all her loveliness. I made her rise again in slow time (worked by invisible mechanism) from among the golden groves. I bathed her once more in ambrosial light. I saw again in her angelic lineaments that exquisitely gentle and half-mournful expression. I illumined, too, from within,

the celestial substance which formed her arms and her le——In short, I dwelt upon her perfections with a miserable pleasure, which every moment made me more and more wretched. I saw her as she appeared for the last time, and felt the curious sensation I have described as “a wrench.” It was misery, despair, desolation. I began to toss, and passed a terrible night—the worst since the well-known measles epoch, when people sat up with me. Towards morning I began to dream, and I saw her again, bathed in pink light.

I came down to utter blankness, and to—the meal known as breakfast. The breakfast-room, a cheerful little apartment, was also “bare and blank,” and reminded me of a hovel. But I had never been in a hovel. Everything jarred upon me. It all looked like school. It had the rawness and general prose of that establishment. I wanted to have everything bathed in pink ambrosial light. I was silent and

gloomy, and could not eat with the indiscriminate selection, which in my instance was almost matter of notoriety. I became the subject of public remark. It was again insisted I was ill: an insinuation indignantly repudiated. Honest John Plusher then rallied me in his own pleasant way on being "put out" by something: a course of remark which bitterly wounded me. Then my sister, Mrs. Honest John, kindly changed the subject to the spectacle of last night. "It was *very* good," said Honest John — "uncommonly good! — had seen nothing better, in fact. Scenery so good! 'Jove! what perfection they've brought these things to now-a-days! Now, that scene of the dancing; the what d'ye call it——?"

"The Transformation Scene?" said Mrs. Honest John.

"No, the one where they come in and dance?"

I could not restrain myself, but broke

out hoarsely, "The Glittering Glade of the Fairies, and the Valley of the Golden Foliage!"

They started.

"By Jove!" said Honest John, looking at me with astonishment. "But," said he, "it was spoiled by that stout, dumpy woman with the wand: the Queen, or whatever they called her."

My cheeks were burning. I felt them blazing. *She* to be thus grossly described! But, good in the main, Honest John was a rough creature—perhaps a *little* coarse.

"Eh!" he said to me, "did you see how heavily she moved? It was like an elephant waltzing."

An elephant waltzing! My cheeks like coals! Every eye upon me! I could not stand it, and fled from the room—crying, I believe. They must have thought me going mad. Honest John came to soothe me, but cautiously and with a sort of wonder. It was proposed that for the

morning pastime we should visit a palace—the Crystal, or some such thing: “make a day of it,” as Honest John said. I agreed. I was indifferent; they might lead where they would; nay, I even assumed a sort of wild and ghastly merriment discordant with my habitual character. It was done to hide the grim despair that was working under my jacket. I saw every minute they knew not what was come over me (how should they?), and John all through the day kept his eye carefully upon me.

We went to the Palace. I saw it; that is, *they* saw it. The despair and blankness was growing upon me more and more. I refused food. I declined buns and “cream tarts,” a delicacy I was known to be partial to. I was pining to be alone again. But as it grew towards evening, and the darkness was closing in, and the street-lamps began to be lighted, the blankness and desolation seemed to come on me as with a

rush—for I knew that very soon the ambrosial pink light would be turned on, and the celestial Divine creature would once more descend. The thought made my heart ache again. We were coming home in a cab. Honest John precipitated our movements with a good-natured apology, for that he was obliged to be back in good time to take Mrs. Honest John to a family dinner at old Backslider's.

The bloom of Christmas was still on. Why was not to-night last night? The people were hurrying by very fast; gas-light was flaring in the shop windows on their faces as they went by. When suddenly a plot, a wild daring scheme, appalling almost in the stupendously bold character of its proportions, leaped into my head. I would do it, or, in reality, sicken and die. It must end.

In a moment my spirits rose. I astounded them by the sudden change. I

laughed boisterously. I saw Honest John glancing at me a little nervously. I became almost exultant, but am ashamed to think into what a little monster of craft I became suddenly transformed. I accounted for the alteration in my demeanour by an admission that the sickness with which I had been charged had altogether passed away, and that I was now restored to comparative health. I pretended to have had nothing heavy on my mind but pudding.

I thought that they would never go to that dinner at old Backslider's. But at last they did. Then I hurriedly matured my guilty scheme. I took the Contemporary Boy aside and unfolded to him the details. He was first appalled, then stupified, by the daring of the undertaking. When he recovered himself, he declined to take part in it; until, in my desperation having recourse to awful threats, he gave way. The scheme was a

wicked, nefarious, stolen visit to the scene of last night's celestial joys. I made him a partner in my infamy.

Eluding the vigilance of the servants, we set out. But the night was wet and stormy, and our available capital, putting every strain upon our resources, was barely equal to the price of two pit tickets; so a cab was not to be thought of. I wrapped myself proudly in a stoical indifference (and also in the little shrunken garment known to us as a great-coat), and said I did not care. The Contemporary Boy said he did, and held back reluctantly. I had to use violence to bring the Contemporary Boy on—sometimes my hand on his collar, for despair gave me strength.

We asked the way "to the Theatre." Rough men invariably answered us bluntly. "Wot theayter?" asked one. I replied gently, the Contemporary Boy trembling at my side, "The theatre where the Pantomime is." He

replied in the same rough way, "That warn't much help. Howsomever" (I distinctly remember the use of this odd word)—"howsomever, he supposed it were the theayter in Beak-street, eh?" The Contemporary Boy said, boldly, that was it. Then we must take the first turning to the right, then to the left, by the public-'ouse, &c.

The rain was now beginning to pour down very steadily, and we took the first turning to the right, &c., then to the left, by the public-'ouse, &c., and then broke down. We had to ask again. Rain increasing. Contemporary Boy beginning to cry, like a beastly baby as he was, at his saturation. But I should have recollected that he had not the Great Purpose within him, which I had, to bear him up. We asked again, but this time people declined to stop to answer our inquiries. We were fast growing pulpy; and now, in addition to, the responsibility resting on me, I had

the additional burden cast upon me of dragging my companion along, who was crying and moaning under his breath.

It was growing serious, but I still held on. After nearly an hour's walking and an hour's drenching, we reached the theatre the rough man had directed us to. And here we broke down altogether. We knew in a second, from the outside, that *it was not the one*.

I was still equal to the situation, and was calmly asking "the way to the theatre," in the same general terms (to which it was much more difficult to obtain an answer, as we were now actually *at* a theatre), when the Contemporary Boy, utterly disregarding the decencies of life, broke out with such noise—sobs accompanied with stampings in the open streets—as to attract public attention. I had a weight of care on me at this moment, for there was a tumult of grief in my breast, from the aim of this fatal expedition being yet so far off; thinking,

too, how by this the peerless Queen would have nearly reached the close of her too, too short career. A humane bystander, taking interest in my situation, and witnessing the insane behaviour of the Contemporary Boy, charitably entered into the case. He learned from me a short outline of the Celestial Entertainment, with the names and situations. "I know," said the humane bystander — "I know the place. But, bless you, my lad ! it's miles away from here. If you was to take the best 'Ansom, and the best Oss as was in that 'Ansom, you wouldn't do it afore nine." "But," said I, timorously, and with a blankness of despair coming over me, "we could walk, you know — walk *very* fast." In the confusion of my senses I did not see how this process could convey us faster than cab and horse. But this I did see : that it was all over with me for that night. And so, wet, miserable physically, miserable morally, I announced to the Contemporary Boy that we were

going home; and this quieted his dastard soul.

The Retreat was accomplished with wonderful skill, but under circumstances of terrible hardship. It seemed to be all splash, soak, and flounder. We were perpetually stumbling into puddles—a minor trouble—yet I know not if it were not the sorest of all our miseries. After prodigies of generalship we reached our own door. The maid who opened it was all in a fright. We presented a piteous spectacle, as though newly taken out of the water by the grapnels of the Humane Society's men. But I had presence of mind to caution her to strict silence; and we crept up-stairs to bed. The state of the stair-carpeting after our passage was (I was afterwards informed on good authority) a subject of grief and scandal to the person whose duty it was to look after that department. Hot drinks were suggested; an offer greedily caught at by the Contemporary Boy. I accepted it languidly,

but merely on sanitary grounds, for indeed I was growing indifferent to life. This last blow and stroke of ill success had finished me. I looked on myself as separated from the Queen of My Soul for ever, and I buried my head in fine linen and blankets, supremely wretched. I was shivering all down the back, and very hot and dry about the throat.

By - and - by came home Honest John Plusher and his wife. I heard them knock, I heard their voices on the stairs, as in wonder ; for it was early, and they expected to see us up. I was quivering and rattling and chattering my teeth, when lights flashed in the room, and Honest John stood over me.

“Halloa !” he cried, in his cheerful way, “what’s all this?” (Just as I had feared, the craven Contemporary Boy had betrayed me.) “Come, come, we shall be all right again in the morning, hey, shan’t we?” And yet I detected a wounded tone in

Honest John's manner, which pained me to the quick. "Why," he said, "couldn't you have told me? Old John would have been game for a second go at the pantomime, if you had asked him. You might have trusted me, my boy, instead of stealing off, and half killing yourself." This was indeed heaping on coals of fire. Deceive Honest John on mere common grounds? No, not for worlds, not for all the cakes, apples, theatres, and pocket eight-bladed knives (with ingenious crook and lever for removing a stone out of a horse's shoe) in the world! But here I was, racked with a gnawing passion for a Celestial Being of ambrosial make, a passion which was consuming me as with slow fire, and which I dare not mention. Surely there was some excuse. John went on in the same mournfully injured way, heaping on the coals of fire as with a shovel. "If you had told me, my boy, we could have fixed for to-morrow night, taken a cab, and done the thing decently. I thought you

and I knew one another better than that. I don't care much for the sort of thing myself, except just once and away; but if you had told me, or——" I could bear it no longer. "O, John! John!" I said, "I am a wretched, miserable, broken-hearted man——boy!" and drawing down his head to me, with much confusion, and I believe with tears, told him the whole state of my mind.

Then, why had I not confided in him? Why, indeed? In all my life I never experienced such nobility, such true nobleness, responsive to my confidence. He entered into it like a thorough gentleman; understood it perfectly, sympathised pitifully. He comforted and compassionated me. He soothed my poor wrung heart. Nay, more——wonderful to relate, he promised to assist me, to the utmost of his power, to forward my views, whatever they were! A thrill passed over me, in addition to the physical anguish thrill. I could not believe my senses. "Yes, yes," said Honest John,

with mystery. "You must go to sleep now. But I have thought of a scheme; we will plan it all together in the morning. Hush! not a word more to-night. Rely on me. Mrs. Mountjack is the very woman."

Mrs. Mountjack the very woman! Why? —who? How singular! What could it mean? But Cousin John was a man of deep purpose, and when he spoke, spoke what he meant to do. I allowed the image of the divine and radiant Being to rise before me clothed in light, held with her a short and rapturous conversation, and dropped away into sweeter dreams.

How mysterious, and even unequal, are the workings of fate! In the morning I rose fresh and perfectly restored to health, while the craven Contemporary Boy was, according to the strange metaphor, as hoarse as a drum. His eyes were swollen frightfully in his head. I could not but interpret this as just retribution for his abject behaviour of the previous night.

Honest John and I had a private interview in the parlour before breakfast, before the ladies came down. I again told him, frankly and candidly, my views, which were of the most honourable tenor. I seemed to myself of a sudden to have grown a man. I spoke calmly and composedly. I would go through with it, I said. But to come to details. Now, what of this Mrs. Mountjack, the person to whom allusion had been made the night before?

Then Honest John unfolded his plan. His statement was full and satisfactory, and left nothing to be desired. The plan was delightfully clear and simple. Mrs. Mountjack was a milliner, who did work, "bodies," &c., in an economical way for Mrs. Honest John. There was nothing very important in that, and my face fell. But Mrs. Mountjack had a sister (there was scarcely much more in *that*), and this sister was engaged as "costumière" at the theatre. Ah! there was much in *that*, and my face rose. Cousin

John was indeed honest!—a brave deliverer—a noble creature! When was it to be? That very day if I liked.

I could have hugged him. Could? I did. “And, as a favour,” I said, “not a word to Honest Mrs. John. Women, you know——” An earnest squeeze showed that he understood me perfectly.

We saw Mrs. Mountjack. She was not very busy. She could spare us an hour. She could come now—to be sure. Margaret Mountjack was down at the theatre. We took a cab, the three of us.

My heart beat tremendously. Those were terrible moments of commingled joy and anxiety. I was all in a tremble and a flutter, for I was now, in all human probability, to see my princess. She was to be there—was sure to be there—temporarily on a visit from diviner regions—was Mrs. Ricks. Who was she? Mrs. Ricks was the Fairy Queen. What! not known by some female spiritual name, common to the angelic choirs?

No! Simply Mrs. Ricks, wife of Ricks. What! married? And why not? And yet, someway, it seemed to me ludicrous and absurd and dismal. Ricks was a pantaloon at one of the minor theatres over the bridge. It surely should not have been so ordained.

At a dingy lane we were set down, and entered at a dingy door in the dingy lane. The sense of awe and general flutter I experienced at this moment, is beyond description. How would she appear? Glorified, and in her habitual medium of ambrosial pink light; or in a sort of celestial undress? I trembled, for these were awful questions.

We went through many dark passages, Mrs. Mountjack leading. The flavour of these places was unpleasant, verging on the charnel-house flavour. But what of that! We went up little short flights of steps of three or four stairs each; we went round sharp corners, got glimpses into what

seemed a huge cellar lighted from chinks in the wall, and finally arrived at a rather cheerful room where there was a fire, and where, too, there were several women busy "cutting out" and sewing gaudy materials, and where the air seemed charged with remnants. The leading cutter-out was a Mountjack. With her, the other Mountjack—*our* Mountjack—communed a few moments mysteriously. They looked over at me. She then went out—the other Mountjack—and we were invited to admire the articles of apparel in hand. A stream of decayed persons in ill health evidently from the tone of their cheeks, and as evidently not privileged to live in the rich and fattening ambrosial air of the theatre, came in and out. A sallow man, with white-lead cheeks, a tightly-buttoned coat, and a walking-cane sticking out of his under-coat pocket; a fat man, but of the same tinge; a tall lean man; a short stout man, all more or less funny in their re-

marks, but all with the same curious marks of relationship about them; women, too, sickly unwholesome creatures, dressed rather like decayed housemaids, one with a large umbrella, another in an old striped shawl, with a basket on her arm, and leading a very cold child with a bit of boa round its neck for a comforter. She was as yellow as a guinea, and looked as if she had lately been ill.

“Mind ye have the new ‘body’ for me to-night,” she said. “Bless ye, what a hurry I’m in! Good-by, Mrs. Mountjack.”

“Wait, do,” said our Mountjack. “She’s gone to look for you.”

“I can’t stay,” said the woman; and dragged away the cold child with her.

We waited a few seconds more, and admired some spangles to fill up the time. (How different they from the *real* molten gold, all in a state of liquefaction, that streamed out in all directions at night!)

Then came back the other Mountjack in great haste.

“ I can’t find her nowheres—I can’t find Mrs. Ricks.”

“ Bless you, she was here,” says her sister.

“ Come and gone !”

“ O, was she ! Then that’s all right. You saw her, then ?”

“ Who ?” says Honest John. “ Why, was that her ?”

“ Her with the child. Yes,” says both the Mountjacks.

“ Bless my soul !” cries Honest John Plusher, “ what a world it is ! So that was the Fairy Queen !”

I could not believe it. I refused to believe it. I laughed scornfully.

But I came to believe it afterwards, and I have believed it ever since, and I believe it now. It was a cruel, crushing blow. O, Harlequin Fairy Morgana, I have found a greater changer than you, many and many a time since that day !

IN THE BOUDOIR.

It was now about eight o'clock. Mrs. Bruce said, half timidly, it was time, she thought, for Fairy Alice to "go up." Mr. Bruce too, approaching her tenderly, said she must not tire herself. Down the corridor floated sounds of music from the drawing-room, where the piano was busy, with the horney sounds of a violincello in moments of expression. Mr. Singleman was playing a duet with the junior Miss Pilgrim, and his soul was in his bow.

Fairy Alice was eager to stay. This story-telling was new to her, but she did not like to oppose those kind wishes. She drew her father's face down to her own. "If I might stay a *little* longer, and hear a little more."

"To be sure, darling. I am only afraid of your not being strong enough. Uncle Broughton shall think of something else: and then——"

"O, thank you, thank you, dear papa, I am so glad. Now, Uncle Broughton."

"God bless me," said he, "I might as well set up to be the fellow in the 'Arabian Nights.' Do you want to make me a professional story-teller in my old age? I don't know how to do the thing."

"O, uncle! after your two pretty stories."

"O, I blundered through them somehow. Let me see. I *did* hear something once, but it's not *my* story, recollect. Last winter I was at Shafto Boulter's, in the north, and we drove over to see Leet Castle, near Broadstairs; a regular show-place—baronial hall, oak floors, hiding-places, lead statues, ponds, and the regular thing. And as dark as a dungeon. How they could see to dine in those days, I never could conceive. But the pictures were delightful. We had the whole family on the walls, in rows. Ladies in ruffs, in 'sackbacks,' in powder; and all the gentlemen of the Leet family in such fine theatrical coats; and the grandfather a

charming young fellow, in a green velvet coat, powdered hair, and a fowling-piece in his hand."

Fairy Alice's soft eyes began to widen with interest, as she heard this description.

"There was an old fellow, a steward, who called himself Mr. Dipchurch, who took us round—and by Jove also took seven and sixpence of my money—and who described them like the men in the panoramas. And he told us about the young gentleman in the green velvet coat, and about the ladies. But he came back to me when he found me standing before an oval portrait, which I had picked out from all the rest, as like you, Fairy, as one pea to another. It was of a little girl, with a dog, too. I never saw such a pretty thing."

"O, with a dog," said Fairy Alice, lifting herself up in enthusiasm; "how charming!"

"One of these days we shall have you done in your red cloak, and with a dog too. With this said dog that is to come to-mor-

row, who is to be called 'Turk,' or 'Dash,' or 'Cæsar.' 'Pon my word, I am getting quite fond of Turk, or Dash, or Cæsar already. I am sure he will have a fine bushy tail and mane, and a loud bark, and will jump into the water, and carry out a walking-stick in his mouth."

Again little Alice could scarcely contain herself at the picture of these coming joys, and clapped her hands with delight. The image of this dog *in posse* was too much for her. "But about the little girl," she said, "and the old man, what did he tell about her?"

"As well as I recollect, it was something to this effect," said Uncle Broughton.

MISS CICELY'S PORTRAIT.

I do believe (said Mr. Dipchurch, the steward, while doing the honours of the picture-gallery), there never came down upon God's earth a sweeter angel than that little

child there, with her arms about the dog's neck. She was the joy of the house; and if you were ever so low-hearted, the sight of her bright face, as she danced round the lawn, or tripped down the passage, was as good a cure as a sorrowing man could desire—better, a deal, than can be found at the bottom of a tankard. I declare there was music in her merry laugh, fine music as ever was played on an organ; and a little speech of hers made our heavy work come very light. Every one was glad to have her at his knee, to hear her pretty talk and prattle; and she had such coaxing ways, there was no refusing her anything. She would come to me with, "Dear, good Mr. Dipchurch" (I was under-steward then, and had charge of the bread-room), "Dear, good Mr. Dipchurch, I want a very *very* big loaf for the poor woman at the gate." And though our squire would not have been over-pleased, as he said it encouraged rogues and trampers (which I believe it did), yet I

could not resist her little ways; and she would go off with her large loaf—about as large as herself—in her arms down the avenue. She had such delight in doing of good works, that she might have been a little Sister of Charity; and I knew most of the pocket-money the squire took delight in giving her, she gave away to the poor people about, always getting some one to take her out. It was a pretty sight to see her going on these walks, in her straw-hat and blue cloak, her little basket on her arm, and the pet dog following on behind.

Pincher was the name of the dog—a sheep-faced, blinking, yellow-haired, long-backed creature, who was good for nothing but lying in the sun all day, and eating at all times. No one cared very much for him; and he would have been sent away long since (shaming the house as he did), but that he was Miss Cicely's own dog. One day he had come panting up the

avenue with his tongue hanging out and his fore-paw broken by a stone, flying from some cruel boys of the village who had been hunting him; and at the door he fell over on his side, and lay there quite spent and exhausted. It was Miss Cicely who, chancing to come out upon the steps, took him up in her arms, cried over him, and tied up the broken paw with her own little hands. The squire was for having him shot at once, to put the poor brute out of pain; but Miss Cicely begged so hard that they would only try—just try and save his life, that he was brought in and taken all care of, and soon after was going about quite sleek and fat. From that time he was Miss Cicely's own dog, going with her everywhere; and very often I have seen her as you see her in that picture, sitting on the terrace, dressing his yellow neck with flowers, making frills for his sheep's face; he blinking his round eyes

lazily, and letting her do much as she pleased with him. For she was a pleasant child.

Someway, I could never take much to her cousin, Lady Alice, and I believe nobody about the place ever did. I fancy that same ladyship to her name went a good deal towards turning her head; for she was always talking of her family, and what a great lady her mother had been—one Donna Maria, as she told us. Which was like to be true enough, as her father was a proud man, and was said to have married a prouder lady over in Spain. He was all this time away at the wars, fighting the French, and for four or five years his daughter was left at the Grange, and brought up with Miss Cicely. It used to make us laugh sometimes to see her little airs, and the way she would walk up and down in her black lace, a red rose fixed in the side of her hair, with a fan, in the broad daylight, as she told us the Spanish

ladies always did. This was droll enough ; but there were other points about her that came, no doubt, of that same Spanish blood, which the servants were not long in finding out. If they were long in attending to her when she called, or if she were crossed in getting what she wanted, she would toss back her head, and beat her little hands with her fan, and stamp her foot—looking so wicked all the time. The squire only laughed at these fits, and, I believe, encouraged them unknown to himself, giving her her way in everything ; but the old people, of course, shook their heads, and prophesied that such a temper would never bring her to good.

Miss Cicely, curiously enough, loved her very much, doing anything to please her, and giving in to all her perverse ways, which the Lady Alice took easily, as if she were a young queen, twenty years old, and such things were only her right. But what I fancied least in her was the dislike she had to the poor

limping dog—she always wondering how any one could take up with such a low-born English cur. Often, very often, I have seen her exactly as in that picture, standing behind and looking down with a sort of contempt on Miss Cicely and her dog Pincher. It is a mystery to me up to this day, how she ever came by the odd notions she had. I suppose she took them from her mother's country, where, I've heard, that they are women full-grown at sixteen years old. Once, indeed, when Miss Cicely was taken very bad with some sickness (a sickness that came only once more in her little life); once, I say, when she was lying ill, and everybody going about with blank faces and a dead-weight on their breasts, I do think Lady Alice took it to heart. I saw her at the end of the long gallery, when she thought no one could see her, crying bitterly.

I think she would have died sooner than let any one see her cry, and I recollect she

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had picked up some story out of the old history books about a boy who had a stolen fox under his cloak, and let it eat into his flesh rather than cry out—which she said was a fine thing, a noble thing, of the boy. Heathenish, I thought it, and what you might expect from unchristian people. But the way the poor dumb brute Pincher took on and grieved was enough to shame Christian men with souls. To see him—that we had taken for a lazy, sleeping creature, with no thought but for his meals—moping, and searching, and turning up his long face to everybody, whining dismally in corners, and refusing his food, would have touched a heart of stone, and made me heartily repent having so misjudged the poor animal.

There was much jubilee when Miss Cicely got over that attack. The poor squire had nearly gone distracted, and in his trouble, I believe, vowed to build a church if she got well. Whether this was

so or not, a church was begun immediately, and there it stands on the southern half of the estate, some five miles away. It might be a year after that, coming on to November—it was hard by November, for All Hallow's Eve was only a few days off—that young Mr. Richard came down to the Grange for the shooting. A fine, bold-spoken, cheery fellow, full of life and spirits, with an off-hand manner which took with everybody that came near him. He was full of dash and spirit, and was bound for the French wars, which were then being fought. So he came down and shot and ranged over the fells, and every keeper and follower about the place, and squire himself, thought they never met with so fine a fellow. As I said, he was so ready and off-hand with the men, and in-doors, as you may well guess, the two little girls thought there was nobody far or near to match with Cousin Richard—only each liked him in a way of her own.

It was pleasant when the long evenings came on, and the lamp was lighted, and the fire well raked up, and they were all sitting in this room—the squire weary with his day's hunting, and young Richard having ridden perhaps to and from Arbour Court, where he was fond of visiting—it was pleasant to see how he would draw up his chair and set to work amusing himself with the two little things. He would have them one on each side of him, and very often Miss Cicely, his pet, upon his knee; and there she would laugh and chatter, and ask questions the whole evening. It was enough to make one laugh to see Miss Alice's airs, and the way she tried him with her dignity and stately looks, all to let him know what a great lady she was. Then she would dress herself up in all manner of queer ways, and come in and walk up and down, with her head back, trying to attract Cousin Richard's attention, of which he would purposely take no heed, but talk and laugh with the little creature

on his knee, telling her that he loved simplicity, and to be always simple and natural. Until the other, having flaunted to no purpose, would be ready to sit down in a corner and cry. Not that she would do such a thing. She would not give him that satisfaction, but would sit and sulk the whole evening. Then he would speak to her with a kind of mock respect—calling her the grand Spanish lady, the Donna, the dark-haired Donna who had a right to queen it there on account of her high blood. “Poor little Cicely,” he would say, “you have no blue blood in your veins.”

Blue blood! that was his word on which she would stamp her foot and fire up, saying, she had a great Don in Spain for her uncle, who had a long, long sword, and would protect her and kill any one that insulted one of his family. At which terrible threat Mr. Richard would nearly drop from off his chair with laughter, and the squire would lift his eyes from his newspaper and laugh too;

and then she would step away out of the room, looking round on them all very wickedly. Then Miss Cicely, with tears in her eyes and putting up her hands, would beg and pray of Cousin Richard not to be so very cruel to Cousin Alice; and it would all end in Mr. Richard's going out and bringing her back with much difficulty, finding her outside the long corridor like a scared deer. She would tell him she hated him, and always would hate him, and talk again of her Spanish uncle and his long rapier, which only made Mr. Richard laugh more and more, and say he would be proud to meet the old Don.

Pretty much the same scene used to go forward every night, but the fact was, that for all her pettishness and talk of hating him, she was very fond of Mr. Richard. Whenever he would pretend to be angered at some of her saucy speeches, and not speak to her for a time, I could see she got troubled, and tried all manner of little tricks to

bring him round again, without bringing down her pride. Once, when she had marched herself out of the room into the corridor, Miss Cicely came running out after her (I was just then coming up-stairs, and so I heard it all), and putting her arms round her, said :

“ Come back, darling, do. Cousin Richard didn’t mean what he said—I know he didn’t. He told me so the other day. I’ll run and tell him, and make him promise not to do it any more.”

Well, I declare, I saw her push the sweet child from her, firing up as if she had been a woman of twenty.

“ Don’t speak to me in that way,” she said. “ I don’t want your help, you poor little child. I can do without it.” Here came a little scornful laugh. “ I dare say Cousin Richard loves me, though he doesn’t set me on his knee and pet me like a baby.”

With that she flounced away, leaving

poor Miss Cicely standing there, with her head hanging down, and looking after her quite scared.

Would you think it? The proud little lady was jealous. It was queer, the notion of such a thing in one so young; but so it actually was, as I afterwards came to find out.

Poor Miss Cicely was sadly distressed at finding her so cold, and could not make out what was at the bottom of it; however, they were soon friends again. Meantime, Mr. Richard stayed on over a month, until his time grew very near, riding over, every day, to Arbour Court for reasons of his own. One day came down to us, as usual, Miss Cicely, to ask for her loaf, "And," said she, as soon as she came in, "dear, good Mr. Dipchurch, when I have my own large, big house, I shall have plenty of bread to give away, and you shall take care of it, and have a great room to yourself."

"I thank you, Miss Cicely," I said, "but

I fancy we shall have to wait a few years before we get into the big house."

"Not so very, very long, Mr. Dipchurch," she said, putting back her yellow curls with one of her roguish looks—"not so very long——"

"Pretty well, I think," I said. "Say ten years, at the least."

"Listen, good Mr. Dipchurch. I have such a great, little secret; oh! such a wonderful secret," she said, opening her little eyes; "but you won't tell any one?"

"Trust me, Miss Cicely, for that."

"Well," she said, "dear Cousin Richard—you know Cousin Richard?"

"Well, I think so, Miss Cicely."

"Well, dear Cousin Richard says, as soon as he comes home from the wars, that I am to be his little wife, and we are to live together in a big house."

"You don't say so," I said, pretending to open my eyes with astonishment.

"I do, I do!" she was clapping her hands

and giving one of her merry laughs, "he has told me so over and over again."

"Take care," I said, "he doesn't meet with some beautiful lady in foreign parts—a handsome princess, who might fall in love with him when he was taken prisoner, and marry him for good and all."

She turned very grave and thoughtful on this.

"Do you think so really, Mr. Dipchurch?"

"Nothing more likely, Miss Cicely; these military gentlemen do it every day."

She began counting on her fingers, and looking on the ground, and then very wistfully at me.

"I must speak to Cousin Richard," she said, taking up the hem of her skirt, and plaiting it as if she were going to sew.

"I think that would be the best way," I said, looking wise. "In fact, it would be more desirable to make an arrangement, and put it off altogether until he came back."

"Do you think so?" said she again, still plaiting.

"Well," I said, "it's purely a matter of convenience, but I think it would be better. Then there's your cousin, Lady Alice, I fancy he has encouraged ideas of the same sort in her, too."

"O no!" said Miss Cicely; "Cousin Richard would not do that."

"Nothing more likely, Miss Cicely," I said; "he is a man of the world."

She seemed wonderfully confounded at this notion, and fell to thinking it over and over. Then, putting her hands to her little head, she called out suddenly:

"O! dear Mr. Dipchurch! such a strange pain in my head! such an odd feel!"

I was frightened a bit at what she said, for you don't hear of children of her age complaining of such things, and it was in that way what she had before, began. At that moment came by her Spanish cousin, looking stately, as usual. Miss Cicely runs

out and stops her, putting her arms about her.

"Darling cousin," she says, "good Mr. Dipchurch tells me that Cousin Richard has made you a promise that when you grow up and the wars are over——"

"And if he has?" said the Donna, looking very wickedly at her; "has he not the right?"

"Only," says Miss Cicely, very gently, "I thought I was to be his little wife."

"You!" says Lady Alice; "you! you little little child! What, *you* a wife for Cousin Richard!"

"I know it," said Miss Cicely, hanging down her head; "but I thought when I grew to be tall—but you are much more beautiful!"

The Spanish Donna laughed scornfully.

"And did Cousin Richard promise you?"

"I thought so."

"Good!" says Lady Alice, getting into one of her fits; "you are a wicked, de-

ceitful girl—don't dare to speak to me again."

She flounced away in a fury, and all the rest of that day Miss Cicely was very silent and dejected, keeping much to herself, and talking a deal to her dog Pincher. Next morning, which was a fine frosty one, with the sun shining out, she came running to me before breakfast to tell me something.

"O! Mr. Dipchurch!" she cried, "I have made up my mind" (her little mind, sweet soul). "I thought it over in bed last night, and I have made up my mind——"

"Tell me all about it, then, Miss Cicely," I said; "but first, how is that little pain?"

"I had it a long time last night," she says, "but it is better this morning. I will give up Cousin Richard to Cousin Alice, and she shall be his little wife, and they will be very happy together. Don't you think so, good Mr. Dipchurch?"

As she said this, the sweet angel looked at me so earnestly and sadly, that I could

have taken her up in my arms and cried heartily over her.

"Yes," she said, beginning again to plait the corner of her frock, "I think it will be all for the best. When Cousin Richard comes in for breakfast, I will go to him and tell him all, and that Cousin Alice is much more worthy of him."

That little pain of hers troubled me very much, and I determined to let squire know of it at once. Presently they all came in to breakfast. Squire, and Lady Alice looking haughtier than ever—all except Mr. Richard, who was out riding. Squire looked knowingly and laughed as he said he was gone over to Arbour Court—perhaps might come home to breakfast, perhaps might not—squire rather thought he would not, and looked knowing again.

He did come back then, but just as they had finished. Miss Cicely, who was at the window, called out that here was the postman on his pony, coming down the long

avenue, and Cousin Richard riding beside him. Not long after, I saw him in the oak corridor, with a great open letter in his hand, and looking very troubled.

"I must go to the wars at last, Dipchurch," he says, trying to be cheerful.

"Well, sir," I said, "nothing like honour and glory: but I hope they have given you a long day?"

"Only ten days, Dipchurch," he says, with a sigh, and went on muttering about a bubble in the cannon's mouth.

Then it all came out; Mr. Richard was engaged to be married to one of the young ladies over at Arbour Court, and now it was settled that they should hurry on the marriage before he went.

There was great bustle and excitement at the Grange that day. Every one about the place having the story that Mr. Richard was now going for a soldier, but was first to be married to Miss Abbott. I thought the Spanish Donna, when she heard it, would

have bitten her lip through with rage and mortification; but she only tossed back her head as if she didn't care, and said not a word.

But for that sweet child, Miss Cicely, my heart bled and bled again. She was so grieved, and I believe took on quite as much at the idea of her cousin's mortification. But she loved Mr. Richard, and fretted so when he went. Not for that little notion she had first taken into her head, but because he was so free-hearted with her, and so good and kind, that—but I don't like thinking of those times. She would sit on the grass as before, talking to her dog. I have heard her say, when passing softly behind her, 'You, poor Pincher, you are the only one left that I love, after papa, the only one—the only one.' This she would say over and over again, while the creature would look at her fondly, with his heavy blinking eyes, and whine, as if he understood what she said.

Soon she began to complain of a certain weariness and heavy feeling about the head, and that first pain turned out (as I thought it was) the warning of the old sickness coming back again. Water on the brain they called it.

As I said before, I don't like thinking over those days; it gives me a dead weight on my heart, and such a choking feeling in my throat. I may as well say at once that, before a fortnight was out, the little angel was taken gently up to heaven, where (added Mr. Dipchurch, huskily) it is my firm persuasion she is now and ever shall be, world without end! From which happy country, it is also my firm belief, there never came down a purer soul.

“ And Pincher, the dog ? ”

He went about for some days in a restless sort of fashion, looking, I think, for his little mistress, in all manner of places. I once met him coming along, in his old shambling way, through a place he never was known to be found in before: and

squire met him there, too,—burst out crying over him,—crying and sobbing as if his heart would break.

I had to go away, up to London, a little after that, on business, and when I came home they told me that Pincher had been found one morning under a rose-tree, which Miss Cicely herself had planted. Lying there, stretched out, his poor white sheep's face resting on a bed of moss which grew about the root of the tree.

A NEW FRIEND.

As Mr. Broughton drew to the close of his story, a kind of dismal feeling came upon the company ; and Mr. Bruce even made signs to him to stop. But Mr. Broughton, with the best intentions, was awkward and unskilful, and did not know how to extricate himself. Every one felt that the story of the picture was a sort of little parable—which might at some day be fulfilled in that house.

Fairy Alice herself was filled with a deep

sympathy. "O, it was dreadful, was it not?" she said; "the poor little thing! and the darling yellow dog. I could have kissed him. I wonder will Cæsar or Turk be like him? O, it was *very* sad!"

Just at this moment entered Rogers, from the village. He looked grave.

"I called in for a last visit. But I expected to find Miss Alice going to sleep; you must not sit up."

"We are sending her to bed now," said Mr. Bruce. "You see it was nothing, after all! Fairy has a stronger constitution than the wise people think, and can make herself well without any of us."

"Yes," said the doctor, "we shall see how she is in the morning. I shall come early."

Then came the ceremony of good night. Fairy Alice was carried round, and distributed her kisses like sugar-plums. Uncle Broughton received a whole boxful for his good behaviour that night. Mr. Singleman, who had just put his child to bed,

in its case, tucked it in warmly, and hasped it down securely, for fear it should walk in its sleep during the night, shrank away a little shyly as a sugar-plum was offered to him, and blushed a good deal about the back of his neck.

The doctor spoke in a low voice to Mr. Bruce.

"She shouldn't have been kept so late, or allowed up at all. The child is very weak. I could see it in her face."

Mr. Bruce was quite scared.

"Why, she seemed so well—so wonderfully well, and in such good spirits."

When she was gone, the company talked over her state.

"Little fox!" said Mr. Broughton, in great good humour. "She is getting so sly! so sly!"

But Mr. Bruce went about wistfully and ruefully, trying to find comfort.

"I don't know what to think," he said; "she *seems* in good spirits."

"She will be all right in the morning,"

a wise man said ; “and up-on my word I don’t know but that she may be all the better for it—really, all the better for it.”

But, alas ! that night, about midnight, came a sort of little *réveillé*, in the shape of “a troublesome cough,” which set in quietly and went on gaining in strength towards morning, shaking the little cot in which Fairy Alice lay. Again wistful faces were at her bedside ; with lights, and with soothing drinks, but it was not until morning, that, spent with fatigue, she dropped into a sleep.

In the morning she was better, or said she was better. But the two little coloured spots had come back to her cheeks. She complained of her little chest being “sore,” and it must have been with that night’s rough work. Mr. Bruce said, “I will write to Mr. Brogden this day.”

The wise person in the house affected to think he was making too much of “a little cold.”

“My dear friend, the child is only like

other children. They all get these things—nay, they *ought* to get them.”

But Fairy Alice herself did more to dispel this idea. She forced the gayest little smiles, and nearly choked, with stifling the cruel cough. She sent messages to all the company, specially to Mr. Broughton, that she had been dreaming of the pantomime, and of the fairy, and O! was so grieved about that noble dog!

Uncle Broughton, however, did not hear this. He had been away all the morning, and had driven into the market town. About two o'clock, Fairy Alice, who had insisted on being allowed to get up and go down to her sofa, heard strange sounds at the door, and a grand shaggy head, black, streaked with white, looked in inquiringly, and withdrew again alarmed. There was a laugh behind the shaggy head. Fairy Alice clapped her hands in delight. It was a Newfoundland that Uncle Broughton had with infinite pains hunted up, and begged or bought. He was brought in, reluctantly, but would

keep his mouth open, and show his large red tongue. He was scarcely half a foot lower than "Jock."

The delight that this present caused could not be described. But the dog was shy. By-and-by he would be more familiar. When food, however, was presented, he was good enough to relax and become gracious.

"And how do you feel now, dear?" said Uncle Broughton, anxiously; "better? I knew it!"

"O, I shall be well to-morrow," said she, "and shall go out with 'Jock' and 'Turk.' What a pair," said she, laughing, and clapping her hands.

END OF VOL. I.

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